

# **THE CAL-LEARN PROGRAM IN THE COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES: PROCESS AND BARRIERS**



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## **Preface**

The Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors provided the initial impetus for this evaluation study in 2003 when it directed the Department of Public Social Services to provide information on outcomes associated with the Cal-Learn program. Cal-Learn is a mandatory, statewide program designed to assist pregnant and parenting teens in welfare families to complete their high school education. The quarterly reports DPSS subsequently prepared for the Board created a need for more systematic information on Cal-Learn. DPSS therefore contracted with the Research and Evaluation Services unit within the County's Chief Administrative Office to conduct an in-depth evaluation of the Cal-Learn program's functionality and performance. The present report offers a detailed description of the Cal-Learn program process, as well as an analysis of the barriers that prevent program participants from achieving favorable outcomes. The research plan for the Cal-Learn evaluation project as a whole calls for this report to be followed up in the future by a second report focusing on program results.

The process evaluation offered in this report involved looking closely at a number of interdependent organizations, each of which plays a crucial role in facilitating the participation of teen parents in the Cal-Learn program. While the program as a whole is described at some length in these pages, particular attention is given to the duties and experiences of the GAIN Services Workers (GSWs) at DPSS who are assigned to the Cal-Learn program and the Cal-Learn case managers who are employed by the Adolescent Family Life Programs that contract with DPSS. The main findings in this process evaluation come from a survey conducted with Cal-Learn case managers and focus group interviews conducted with both case managers and GSWs.

The central chapters of this report – Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 – look at barriers that impede program participation and prevent teen parents from earning their high school diplomas or equivalency certificates. Chapter 3 focuses on person-level barriers, i.e. personal deficits and problems, as well as complications centered in families and communities. Chapter 4 analyzes program-level barriers, i.e. impediments that are derived from the way Cal-Learn is organized and administered as a program. The final chapter in this report makes a series of policy recommendations based on the findings produced in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. While it may not be feasible to implement all the recommendations offered in the concluding chapter, implementation of even some of these recommendations is likely to enhance the Cal-Learn program's performance in the future.

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# **Executive Summary**

## **Introduction**

This report is the first part of a two-part evaluation of the Cal-Learn program in the County of Los Angeles. Cal-Learn is a mandatory statewide program for pregnant and parenting teens in families participating in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. The Cal-Learn program uses a combination of intensive case management and financial incentives to encourage these teens to complete their high school education. The State of California implemented the Cal-Learn program in 1995 as part of an effort to promote future self-sufficiency among pregnant and parenting teens in families receiving welfare assistance. This report provides an evaluation of the Cal-Learn program process in the County of Los Angeles, which starts with the identification of eligible teens and, under ideal circumstances, concludes with teens successfully graduating and earning a high school diploma or an equivalency certificate.

## **Case Management and the Importance of Communication and Coordination**

In the County of Los Angeles, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) contracts with four Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agencies to provide case management to approximately 2,900 Cal-Learn participants. Each AFLP agency covers a geographic region or regions, and together the agencies have offices dispersed throughout the County. The Cal-Learn case managers employed by the AFLP agencies deal directly and in person with the program's participants. Case managers are responsible for conducting the initial Orientation session with Cal-Learn teens, and they must subsequently assist the teens in accessing the child care services, transportation and ancillary expenses offered through the Cal-Learn program, as well as any specialized supportive services the teens might need in order to treat mental health, domestic violence or substance abuse problems, and additional services designed to encourage general health and deal with prenatal and postpartum issues. The case managers meet regularly with program participants to ensure that the teens are attending school and making progress toward graduation. In addition, the case managers must complete continual paperwork and work with the teens in their caseloads to obtain report card schedules and report card results.

The success of the Cal-Learn program's intensive case management depends fundamentally on communication and coordination, not simply between the case managers and participants, but also between these two parties and DPSS, the Resource and Referral agencies that manage child care referrals, and the County's school systems. DPSS' GAIN Services Workers (GSWs) assigned to the Cal-Learn program must work with the case managers at the AFLP agencies to record the ongoing progress participants make in school and to obtain the documentation necessary for teens to access transportation and ancillary expenses. Program participants, with the help of their case managers, must work with the Resource and Referral agencies to secure the child care services needed in order for the teens to attend school.

Participants and case managers must also work jointly with the school systems to obtain report card schedules and grades for DPSS.

### **The Financial Incentives to Participate in the Cal-Learn Program**

The Cal-Learn program employs a system of financial bonuses and sanctions to provide additional incentive for teens to make progress in school. Program participants are eligible for up to four bonuses per school year when they turn in report cards indicating a Grade Point Average for a given school term of 2.0 or better. Moreover, program participants earn a one-time bonus of \$500 when they graduate. At the same time, participants who fail to submit report cards to their case managers in a timely manner and/or earn a Grade Point Average of less than 1.0 are penalized with sanctions of \$50 or \$100. As is the case with the intensive case management Cal-Learn provides for its participants, the program's system of financial incentives requires communication and coordination between participants, the case managers at the AFLP agencies, the GSWs at DPSS, and the school systems.

### **The Cal-Learn Evaluation Project in the County of Los Angeles**

In August 2003, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors expressed concerns about results for teens participating in Cal-Learn and instructed DPSS to provide the Board with periodic reports for one year on outcomes associated with the Cal-Learn program. The reviews DPSS produced for the Board, which the Department began providing in May 2004, led to the implementation of several measures designed to improve outcomes associated with Cal-Learn. However, to further implement policies and practices that will bolster future Cal-Learn outcomes, it is necessary to gain a better, more systematic understanding of the Cal-Learn program and the barriers teens face to program participation and graduation. DPSS has therefore contracted with the Research and Evaluation Services (RES) unit within the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to conduct the present in-depth evaluation of the Cal-Learn program in the County of Los Angeles.

### **The Process Evaluation**

The process evaluation offered in this report provides a detailed description of the functionality of the Cal-Learn program and then focuses on the person-level and program-level barriers that impede the progress participants are able to make in school. The main sources of data used in this report are focus group interviews with Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies, program directors at the AFLP agencies, and GSWs at DPSS, as well as responses to a short survey conducted with case managers. Based on this report's key findings, the concluding chapter offers a set of policy recommendations for DPSS and program stakeholders to consider as they grapple with the issue of ways to improve the program in the future.



## Key Findings and Recommendations

What follows is a list of the key findings presented in this report, as well as key policy recommendations that flow from the findings. A more extensive listing and discussion of findings and recommendations is provided in the concluding chapter of this report.

- Housing instability, including homelessness, is a barrier to program participation for a significant proportion of Cal-Learn teens. While the majority of these teens are not homeless, more than 75 percent of the case managers surveyed for this report said they have homeless teens in their caseloads. In focus group interviews, moreover, both case managers and GSWs said that they frequently encounter teens that lack stable places to live. Case managers in particular noted that teens struggling with housing instability often do not receive official Cal-Learn notices, even though Cal-Learn participants are supposed to check with their CalWORKs District's reception desk at least once per month to pick up their mail. Housing instability also makes teens hard to find for in-person meetings.

**Recommendation:** The AFLP agencies and DPSS should jointly consider enhancing the steps the Cal-Learn program takes to reduce housing instability for Cal-Learn teens.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should consider requiring Cal-Learn teens to provide a real residential address in their official program records, even if the address is not the permanent place where they live. Along with this, DPSS might either disallow Cal-Learn teens from giving a DPSS office as their mailing address or place a limit on the amount of time Cal-Learn teens are allowed to use a DPSS mailing address in their official program records.

- Case managers at the AFLP agencies and GSWs speaking in focus group interviews were generally in agreement that GSW caseloads for Cal-Learn are overwhelmingly large. Case managers and GSWs additionally each suggested that overwhelming GSW caseloads are a barrier to effective communication and coordination between the two parties. In turn, the access teens have to services is frequently delayed and overall customer service is compromised.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should avoid any plans to further trim the number of GSWs working on Cal-Learn and, if possible, consider committing additional GSWs to the program so as to return GSW caseloads to the levels they were at in 2000.

- Two-thirds of the case managers surveyed for this study agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn teens sometimes have trouble arranging for child care with the Resource and Referral agencies. Three specific problems in this

area were raised in focus group interviews: 1) Some case managers pointed out that teens are confused by the paperwork they must complete for the Resource and Referral agencies; 2) some case managers said that coordination between the AFLP agencies and the Resource and Referral agencies is weak, and having an additional case manager for child care confuses teens; and 3) a number of Cal-Learn case managers observed that staff at the Resource and Referral agencies are often inaccessible to both program participants and the AFLP agencies.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider conducting a more detailed evaluation of the Cal-Learn program's child care referral process.

- In the Cal-Learn case manager survey, 70 percent of the respondents agreed "strongly," and another 21.7 percent agreed "somewhat," that approval time for transportation and childcare should be streamlined to eliminate long delays.

**Recommendation:** In an effort to reduce delays in access to supportive services, DPSS should consider permanently stationing the Cal-Learn program Deputy, or a person with the authority to make all necessary decisions regarding approval of supportive services, in the El Monte GAIN office where the Cal-Learn GSWs conduct their daily duties.

- More than 9 out of 10 respondents to the AFLP Cal-Learn case manager survey agreed "strongly" that school districts need to become more familiar with Cal-Learn and its requirements. In addition, 78.3 percent of respondents either agreed "strongly" or agreed "somewhat" that they sometimes have difficulties getting the schools to release the report cards of teens in their caseloads.

**Recommendation:** DPSS and the AFLP agencies may wish to consider increasing outreach efforts and informational campaigns designed to heighten awareness about Cal-Learn within school districts.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider appointing an official Cal-Learn liaison with the school districts to answer questions schools have about the program and facilitate the flow of information between the school districts and the case managers at the AFLP agencies.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may also wish to ask the school districts themselves to appoint a liaison or contact person who could assist DPSS and the AFLP agencies with resolving complications and with outreach efforts.

- An overwhelming majority (95 percent) of the respondents to the case manager survey agreed either "strongly" or "somewhat" that Cal-Learn program

participants living with parents (nested teens) would be more motivated to get good grades and complete high school if the \$100 bonuses for satisfactory progress in school were paid directly to them instead of to the CalWORKs payee.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider asking the State to reconsider statewide regulations regarding payment of the \$100 bonus so that the money awarded for satisfactory progress in school is paid and mailed directly to the teens.

- More than 95 percent of the respondents to the case manager survey agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn paperwork takes too much time, is needlessly repetitive, and does not allow enough time to provide proper case management to program participants.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider working with the AFLP agencies to streamline the paperwork that case managers are asked to complete.

## **A Context for the Evaluation of Outcomes**

As the first part of a two-part evaluation, the examination of the Cal-Learn program process presented in this report should be approached as an analysis that provides a necessary context for the forthcoming second part of the evaluation on Cal-Learn outcomes. The success of the Cal-Learn program can be meaningfully gauged only through a grasp of the personal challenges teens bring to the program. Moreover, policymakers will be able to determine the areas in which participant outcomes might be improved only if they are armed with the practical information provided in this report on the administrative and organizational barriers the program inadvertently places in the way of participant progress.



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### The Cal-Learn Program and the Origins and Purpose of this Evaluation Project

In 1995, the State of California implemented Cal-Learn, a mandatory program administered at the County level and designed to reduce long-term welfare dependency among pregnant and parenting teens. Cal-Learn uses a combination of intensive case management and financial incentives to encourage and assist these teens in completing their high school education. The program targets pregnant and parenting teens under 19 years of age who have not completed their high school diploma or equivalent and are in families participating in the California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs) program. There is no minimum age limit for Cal-Learn, and eligibility begins during the first trimester of pregnancy. The program is open to both teen mothers and fathers, and the teen parent or parent-to-be must reside with their adult parents or legal guardian.<sup>1</sup>

The numbers provided in Table 1 show that, as of January 2006, approximately one-third of the Cal-Learn caseload in the State of California was located in the County of Los Angeles. Moreover, as shown in both Table 1 and Figure 1, the Cal-Learn caseload in the County of Los Angeles has declined by close to 37 percent since January 2000, while the caseload in the State (excluding the County of Los Angeles) has declined by 40 percent over the same period.

**Table 1**

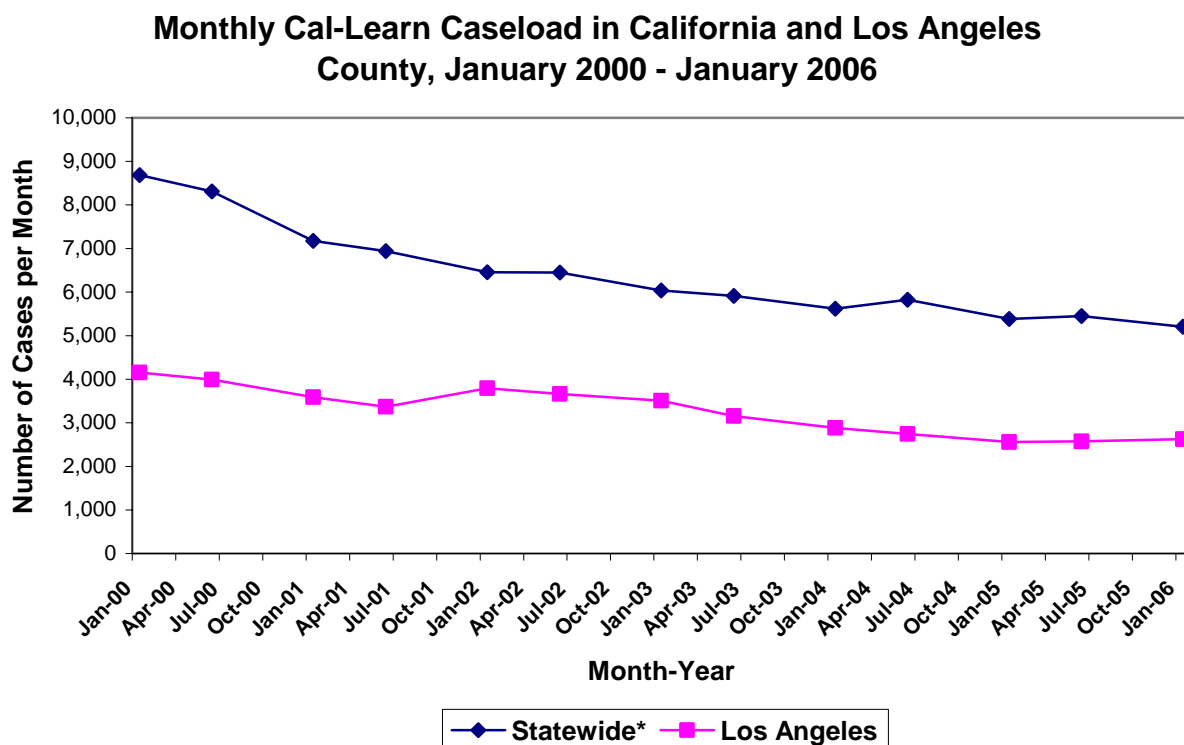
#### **Cal-Learn Caseload Change, January 2000 to January 2006, California and Select Counties\***

<b>State/County</b>	<b>January 2000</b>	<b>January 2006</b>	<b>Percent Change</b>
<b>Statewide</b>	<b>12,843</b>	<b>7,867</b>	<b>-38.7</b>
Statewide excluding LA County	8,687	5,240	-39.7
Los Angeles	4,156	2,627	-36.7
San Bernardino	971	561	-42.2
Sacramento	637	457	-28.2
Kern	599	420	-29.8
Tulare	540	303	-43.8
San Diego	519	294	-43.3
San Joaquin	314	289	-7.9
Orange	430	217	-49.5
Alameda	277	157	-43.3

Source: California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Research and Data Reports files, STAT 45- Cal-Learn Program Teen Parent Monthly Status Report.

\*Counties were selected based on a high caseload and/or participation in the UC Data Evaluation.

**Figure 1**



Source: California Department of Social Services (CDSS), Research and Data Reports files, STAT 45, Cal-Learn Program Teen Parent Monthly Status Report.  
 \*Statewide excludes Los Angeles County's caseload.

In the County of Los Angeles, the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) contracts with four Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agencies to provide intensive case management to Cal-Learn participants. These four AFLP agencies are Childrens Hospital Los Angeles (Project NATEEN), El Nido Family Centers, AltaMed Health Services Corporation (Youth Services Department), and Foothill Family Service. The AFLP agencies employ Cal-Learn case managers to work directly with the program's participants. These case managers often forge a close mentoring relationship with Cal-Learn teens and are responsible for helping them obtain the services they need in order to attend school and make progress towards graduation.

In 2003, the County of Los Angeles Board of Supervisors expressed concerns about outcomes for teens participating in Cal-Learn and issued Board Order No. 38, which directed DPSS to restructure future case management contracts executed with the AFLP agencies to include clearer performance measures.<sup>2</sup> These performance measures, including Orientation attendance rates, school enrollment rates, report card submission rates, and graduation rates, were to be linked to contractual payment points in the future and tied to financial bonuses and penalties based on whether or not the AFLP agencies met performance targets. In addition, the Board instructed DPSS to

provide quarterly reports for one year on outcomes associated with the Cal-Learn program. DPSS began providing these quarterly reports in May 2004.<sup>3</sup> (A copy of Board Order 38, along with copies of DPSS' official written communications with the Board pursuant to this order, are included in Appendix A of this report).

In the period after August 2003, when DPSS inserted the new performance measures into Cal-Learn case management contracts, the AFLP agencies met some but not all of the set performance targets. For example, the final Cal-Learn performance report that DPSS submitted to the Board, covering the period from June to November 2004, showed that the cumulative rate of school enrollment for Cal-Learn participants over this period was 71 percent, while the performance standard set for this outcome was 60 percent. Moreover, the rate of report card submission for the reporting period was 57 percent, exceeding the performance target set at 50 percent. At the same time, the graduation rate was 44 percent for the reporting period, falling short of the performance target set at 50 percent.<sup>4</sup>

The reviews DPSS produced for the Board led to the implementation of several measures designed to improve outcomes associated with Cal-Learn. For example, DPSS has worked with AFLP agencies to standardize a form used by alternative schools in providing progress reports when report cards or progress reports are not normally issued by these schools. Additionally, DPSS has made new efforts to assist AFLP contractors in their outreach efforts by disseminating Cal-Learn material to agencies that work with disadvantaged teens.

However, to further implement policies and practices that will bolster future Cal-Learn outcomes, it is necessary to gain a better, more systematic understanding of the program process and the barriers teens face to program participation and graduation. Policymakers, in turn, can draw upon this knowledge to implement measures designed to eliminate or significantly neutralize program-level barriers, and to make the Cal-Learn program more responsive to person-level barriers. To this end, DPSS has contracted with the Research and Evaluation Services (RES) unit within the Chief Administrative Office (CAO) to conduct the present evaluation of the Cal-Learn program in the County of Los Angeles.

### **The UC Data Cal-Learn Evaluation**

The present evaluation would be incomplete if it failed to acknowledge a previous, state-level evaluation of the Cal-Learn Demonstration Project that the University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance (UC DATA) group published in June of 2000.<sup>5</sup> The analytical time frame for the UC DATA report was 1994 to 1999.

The UC DATA report looked at four California counties—Los Angeles, Alameda, San Bernardino and San Joaquin—and was based on analyses of survey data from Cal-Learn participants and administrative data from welfare programs and case management agencies. The report found that teens with full exposure to the Cal-Learn program (i.e. exposure to intensive case management and subject to

bonuses/sanctions) graduated at a significantly higher rate than teens who received no case management.<sup>6</sup> The majority of the teens who received full exposure to Cal-Learn also reported that they found the program's combination of intensive case management and financial incentives helpful.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, teens with full exposure understood the details of the Cal-Learn program and were more likely to participate in it, though they were also significantly more aware of financial bonuses than they were of sanctions.<sup>8</sup> While full exposure to Cal-Learn case management had a positive effect on graduation, it did not have any effect on subsequent childbearing among participants.<sup>9</sup> These findings, among others, were the basis for a number of policy recommendations, and they led the UC DATA research team to conclude that, "(t)he evaluation of Cal-Learn has established the program's value for California's teen parents. The program is motivating teen parents to acquire GEDs instead of dropping out. The challenge now is to build on the success to date and create strategies that bring many teens closer to self-sufficiency."<sup>10</sup>

## **The Organization of this Evaluation**

The present evaluation of the Cal-Learn program in the County of Los Angeles is to be comprised of two parts. Part I, embodied in the present report, consists of a detailed evaluation of the Cal-Learn program process. Part II of the evaluation project, which will be provided in a report at a later date, will look at outcomes associated with Cal-Learn program participation in order to evaluate the impact the program is having on pregnant and parenting teens in the County.

## **The Process Evaluation**

The process evaluation offered in this report presents an in-depth description of Cal-Learn and the services offered through the program, as well as a description of the responsibilities assigned to the major parties involved: The case managers at the AFLP agencies, the GSWs at DPSS who are assigned to the Cal-Learn program, and the teens participating in the program and working towards graduation. Crucial to this discussion is a description of the types of communication that must take place between the various parties in order for Cal-Learn to operate as designed. The detailed program description, in turn, lays the foundation for an analysis of person-level and program-level barriers that impede the progress of Cal-Learn teens through school and towards graduation.

## **Sources and Methods**

RES conducted focus groups and one-on-one interviews with the DPSS and AFLP directors who oversee their respective departments' role in the Cal-Learn program, as well as with Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies, who provide Cal-Learn teens with mentoring and intensive case management, and the data entry personnel at



the AFLP agencies who work collaboratively with the case managers. RES also conducted a focus group with the DPSS GSWs who, sometimes in collaboration with GAIN Services Supervisors (GSSs) and the Cal-Learn Program Deputy, authorize payment of transportation and ancillary expenses, authorize bonuses, and implement financial penalties in cases of noncompliance. In addition, a short survey was conducted with almost all Cal-Learn case managers in an effort to round out and complement the qualitative focus group data.

### **This Report's Detailed Process Description and Research Questions**

The detailed program description mentioned earlier is provided in the next chapter (Chapter 2). The information in this chapter is based, not merely on official materials that describe the program in abstract terms, but also on more nuanced and detailed information that administrators, GSWs and AFLP case managers provided directly to RES through surveys, focus groups and less formal interviews.

Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 build on the description offered in Chapter 2 through discussions of barriers that impede the progress of Cal-Learn teens towards graduation. Chapter 3 focuses on person-level barriers and addresses the following questions:

- How do the economic circumstances of Cal-Learn teens affect their capacity to participate in the program and their progress towards graduation? Do immediate needs for income and housing place demands on participants that conflict with the requirement that they attend school regularly?
- How do pre-existing lifestyle patterns and values among Cal-Learn teens and their families with respect to the relative importance of education affect the willingness and motivation participants have to attend school and participate in the program? How common is resistance to participation in Cal-Learn and what are the reasons for this resistance?
- To what extent do language deficiencies hinder progress through school? Do domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues pose a barrier to graduation for a significant proportion of Cal-Learn teens? To what degree are these teens willing to receive treatment? What kinds of issues prevent teens from receiving treatment?

Chapter 4 shifts the analytical focus from person-level barriers to program-level barriers, and addresses the following questions:

- How does the communication and coordination between all parties involved in Cal-Learn—i.e. DPSS, the AFLP agencies, school systems, program participants, and the Resource and Referral agencies that manage child care referrals—affect the daily functionality of the program? Are there points at which

communication and coordination frequently break down? What are the impediments to more effective coordination and communication?

- Are services—i.e. child care, transportation expenses, ancillary expenses, and specialized supportive services for mental health issues, substance abuse and domestic violence—available to participants in a timely manner? What, if any, are the barriers to efficient delivery of services?
- How do workload sizes affect service delivery? Given the size of their caseloads, are case managers and GSWs able to provide quality, responsive service to Cal-Learn teens?
- How flexible are the rules and regulations governing Cal-Learn participation and the daily administration of the program? To what extent do these rules and regulations either help or hinder program participation and the ability AFLP and DPSS staff have to assist participants in making progress towards graduation?

Chapter 5 is the concluding chapter of this report and makes a series of policy recommendations based on both the report's findings and suggestions offered to RES in focus group sessions and given in answers to the case manager survey. These recommendations are generally geared towards achieving two general and interrelated goals: The first goal is to make Cal-Learn increasingly responsive, where possible, to the difficult personal barriers participants face in attempting to complete their high school education. The second goal is the implementation of policy measures designed to eliminate, where possible, programmatic and organizational barriers that stand in the way of the timely, high-quality service delivery and case management upon which successful program participation depends.

## **Chapter 2**

### **The Cal-Learn Program Process**

#### **The Objective of this Chapter**

This chapter provides a detailed description of the Cal-Learn program process in the County of Los Angeles, beginning with the identification of eligible teens and, under ideal circumstances, ending with participants graduating from high school or an equivalency certificate program. The chapter pays particularly close attention to the responsibilities given to the three most important parties involved in the program process: (i) the AFLP agencies (especially the Cal-Learn case managers employed by these agencies); (ii) DPSS (primarily the GSWs assigned to the Cal-Learn program, but also GSSs and the Cal-Learn program Deputy); and (iii) the teens participating in Cal-Learn. In addition, this chapter describes the supportive services that teens can access through Cal-Learn, such as transportation and child care, and also describes the State-mandated system of financial bonuses and sanctions that are designed to provide teens with additional incentive to attend school and make progress towards graduation.

#### **The Theory Guiding the Cal-Learn Program**

Cal-Learn uses a combination of intensive case management and financial incentives to encourage and assist pregnant and parenting teens in CalWORKs families to complete their high school education. The theory guiding the program is that in promoting education among disadvantaged teens facing the added challenge of parenthood, Cal-Learn is, in a larger sense, promoting the broad, long-term goals associated with welfare reform in the State – namely, self-sufficiency, prosperity and well-being.

#### **Identifying Eligible Teens**

Cal-Learn was established in 1995 and is a mandatory, statewide program for pregnant and parenting teens, under 19 years of age, who have not completed their high school diploma or equivalent, and are in CalWORKs families. There is no minimum age limit for Cal-Learn, and eligibility begins during the first trimester of pregnancy. The program is open to both teen mothers and fathers, and the teen parents or parents-to-be must reside (or be “nested”) with their parents or adult guardians unless they are at least 18-years-of-age, at which point they are eligible to open their own CalWORKs cases. Cal-Learn teens are no longer required to participate in the program once they turn 19, and mandatory participation ends earlier if they graduate before they turn 19. In cases where Cal-Learn teens do not graduate high school by age 19, they have the option of volunteering to continue in the program until they turn 20, or until they earn their high school credential, whichever comes first.

In the County of Los Angeles, teens eligible for Cal-Learn are identified through several possible avenues. For example, a DPSS Eligibility Worker (EW) can discover eligible teens during the CalWORKs intake processes for either the parents of the teens (in cases where the teens are nested), or the teens themselves (if the teens are not nested). GAIN staff, particularly GSWs, can also directly or indirectly help identify and refer eligible teens in the course of making outreach efforts designed to raise awareness about the existence of Cal-Learn within schools and community organizations. In addition, Cal-Learn case managers or other AFLP staff, personnel within the school systems, or staff at other County departments (such as the Department of Children and Family Services), as well as other community providers and teens participating in Cal-Learn, might also identify eligible teens and refer them to the program.

## **The AFLP Agencies and Cal-Learn Case Managers**

The four AFLP agencies with which DPSS contracts to provide Cal-Learn case management have offices that are geographically dispersed throughout the County of Los Angeles. Childrens Hospital Los Angeles (Project NATEEN) has a main office located near Children's Hospital in Hollywood. El Nido Family Centers operates offices in Palmdale, Pacoima, Inglewood, South Central Los Angeles and Carson. AltaMed Health Services Corporation (Youth Services Department) has offices in East Los Angeles and Long Beach. Foothill Family Service operates offices in Pasadena, El Monte and West Covina. An additional AFLP contractor, Southern California Youth and Family Center, closed in September 2005. The Cal-Learn cases managed by this service provider were mostly located in and around Long Beach and Inglewood, and were absorbed by El Nido Family Centers and AltaMed Health Services Corporation (Youth Services Department). El Nido and AltaMed also absorbed some of the defunct organization's case managers and management staff.

Cal-Learn case management is only one of several services each AFLP agency provides. Among other services offered by the AFLP agencies are programs in areas such as teen pregnancy and delinquency prevention, child abuse prevention and intervention, early child development, domestic violence and mental health treatment, and parenting education.

Table 2 shows the number of Cal-Learn participants served by each AFLP agency between December 2003 and February 2004 and provides a general idea of each agency's quarterly Cal-Learn caseload. The table also provides demographic information on Cal-Learn participants, broken down by the AFLP agencies from which they receive their intensive case management. The County's Cal-Learn population as a whole is largely Hispanic and African-American, and is overwhelmingly female.

**Table 2. Cal-Learn Caseload Characteristics, by AFLP Provider, December 2003 – February 2004**

	<b>El Nido</b>	<b>Foothill</b>	<b>Childrens Hospital</b>	<b>Youth &amp; Family</b>	<b>AltaMed</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number Served</b>	1,226	364	280	503	604	2,977
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	39	15	11	20	32	117
Female	1,187	349	269	483	572	2,860
<b>Age</b>						
Under 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 – 15	62	16	16	22	27	143
16 – 17	398	124	82	149	186	939
18	483	148	119	197	236	1,183
19	253	71	51	121	138	634
20 and over	30	5	12	14	17	78
<b>Age at Entry</b>						
Under 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 – 15	195	55	49	82	91	472
16 – 17	507	142	111	203	237	1,200
18	512	163	115	215	268	1,273
19	10	4	4	3	6	27
20 and over	2	0	1	0	2	5
<b>Primary Language</b>						
Armenian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodian	0	2	1	21	2	26
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	940	297	180	372	432	2,221
Korean	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish	285	63	99	109	169	725
Vietnamese	1	1	0	1	1	4
Other	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0	0	0	1	0	1
Asian	8	7	7	44	9	75
Black	486	46	64	176	18	790
Hispanic	640	284	201	253	549	1,927
White	79	24	8	22	27	160
Other	13	3	0	7	1	24
<b>Employment Status</b>						
Employed	60	20	14	30	29	153
Unemployed	1,166	344	266	473	575	2,824

Source: DPSS report to the Board of Supervisors, May 2004.

Most Cal-Learn case managers working at the AFLP agencies have prior experience working with troubled or at-risk teens. Respondents to the case manager survey indicate that close to 80 percent of the AFLP case managers have prior experience working with troubled or at risk teens, and among these respondents almost one-third (31.9 percent) have five years experience, 27.3 percent have between three and four years experience, and 21.3 percent have between one and two years experience. Moreover, when asked how many years they had working as Cal-Learn case managers, slightly more than one-third (35.6 percent) of the survey respondents indicated that they have more than five years experience, and 54.2 percent indicated that they have three years or more of experience. The balance (45.8 percent) either have less than one year of experience (27.2 percent) or between one and two years of experience (18.6 percent).

The number of Cal-Learn case managers each AFLP agency employs is largely determined by the needs of the geographic regions they cover and the number of offices they operate. Childrens Hospital Los Angeles (Project NATEEN), for example, which, as seen in the data compiled in Table 2, serves roughly 9 percent of the Cal-Learn population, operates out of one office and employs six Cal-Learn case managers. El Nido Family Centers, on the other hand, which covers larger geographic areas and operates five different offices serving more than 40 percent of the Cal-Learn population, employs 28 Cal-Learn case managers. Each contractor also employs varying numbers of Cal-Learn supervisors, program managers, and data entry personnel. Some contractors, such as Foothill Family Service, employ case managers who work on Cal-Learn cases as well as cases for other programs offered by the agency.

## **Assigning Teens to AFLP Agencies**

The Cal-Learn sections of the AFLP agencies receive monthly listings from DPSS of potentially eligible participants once they are identified. Cal-Learn participants are assigned to specific AFLP agencies based on their zip code. Supervisors at the AFLP agencies assign these teens to case managers. Data entry personnel within the AFLP agencies, who have access to DPSS' GAIN Employment and Activity Reporting System (GEARS), insert the case manager assignments into GEARS, and GEARS in turn automatically generates form CL1, which is the official Cal-Learn Orientation letter, and sends the form to the teen. (A copy of form CL1 is provided in Appendix D).

The official Orientation letter (CL1) begins by notifying the participant of the date, time and location of the Cal-Learn Orientation appointment. The form then provides a brief description of the Cal-Learn program and its purpose, and notes that the assigned case manager will help the participant access needed health care services available in the community, and will inform the participant about the different kinds of available child

care services. The form also indicates that the case manager will ensure that the participant understands Cal-Learn requirements, help the participant develop an educational plan, and monitor the participant's school progress. Form CL1 additionally notes that the Orientation appointment is mandatory but can be rescheduled if necessary.

Once GEARS generates and sends the official Orientation letter, the participant is included on a daily list of Cal-Learn cases that must be assigned to a DPSS Cal-Learn GSW. A GAIN scheduling clerk manually assigns cases to GSWs.

## **Case Manager Responsibilities**

Under typical circumstances, the Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies each carry a caseload of between 33 and 40 participants. The mean monthly average caseload for Cal-Learn case managers, according to the case manager survey, is 36 teens. The composition of a case manager's caseload continually changes as participants enter and exit the Cal-Learn program. One of the many challenges Cal-Learn case managers face in their work is the completion of Orientation sessions for new registrants. Numerous factors contribute to the difficulties, as will be discussed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, but three such factors should be briefly mentioned at the outset: Firstly, many participants either fail to understand the official Cal-Learn Orientation letter or simply neglect to open it altogether when it arrives in the mail. Secondly, Cal-Learn participants often have unstable, itinerant living situations, and may even be homeless, which means many of them do not receive the Orientation letter after it has been sent. Thirdly, even if new registrants receive and understand the Orientation letter, many of them lack the transportation and child care needed to attend the Orientation appointment.

To combat difficulties in understanding the Orientation letter and, at the same time, increase the likelihood that participants will submit to their required participation in an Orientation session, case managers often send out their own additional, more teen-friendly letter, which provides notification of the Orientation appointment in terms that are easier to comprehend. Moreover, in an attempt to track down new Cal-Learn registrants, who are often difficult to locate, case managers often send follow-up letters, make follow-up phone calls, and/or conduct Orientation sessions through personalized home visits. If registrants cannot be contacted after substantial efforts have been made, the case manager sends a written 'whereabouts unknown' notice to the GSW handling the case in question.

According to Focus Group interviews conducted with case managers for this study, each one-on-one Orientation session for new Cal-Learn registrants lasts roughly one hour and takes place either at an AFLP office or in the participant's place of residence. During these Orientation sessions, case managers explain Cal-Learn requirements to the new participants and give them the official Cal-Learn Program Requirements notice (CL2). (A copy of this form is provided in Appendix D).<sup>11</sup> In addition, case managers

conduct psycho-social evaluations of participants and facilitate access to specialized supportive services and shelters (where necessary), and they work with participants to complete necessary paperwork, including forms required for the AFLP agency's internal record keeping, those required for the provision of child care through Resource and Referral agencies, those required in order to access other services, and additional forms required as part of official Cal-Learn procedures, including the Cal-Learn Agreement, a Consent Form, and a LODESTAR intake form.

Cal-Learn case managers must obtain report card schedules for each of the participants in their caseload so that the official Cal-Learn Notice of Report Card Schedule, (CL 8) can be completed. (A copy of form CL 8 is included in Appendix D). Within 30 calendar days following GEARS' initiation of the Program Requirements Notice (CL2), the case managers are required to send the Notice of Report Card Schedule to participants and their parents/guardians if the participants are nested. The case manager is also required to send a copy of a report card schedule form for each Cal-Learn participant in their caseload to the GSWs handling their cases. The GSWs use the completed CL8 forms to ensure that the participant report cards are submitted to DPSS in a timely manner.

Case managers are required to meet regularly with each of the participants in their caseloads.<sup>12</sup> In addition, the option is generally open for participants who wish to speak or meet with their case managers on a more frequent basis, either over the telephone or in person. The required in-person meetings take place either at the AFLP office where the case manager is based or, as is often the case, in home visits. These meetings provide an opportunity for case managers to develop a mentoring relationship with the participants in their caseload. Case managers ensure the teens are attending school regularly, discuss family planning, family health and prenatal/postpartum care, listen to problems, provide encouragement, inform participants about parenting courses offered through the AFLP agencies, and make arrangements for any services participants might need. The provision of needed services on behalf of their participants often requires that the case managers contact GSWs via either telephone or Fax. The meetings case managers have with participants generate paperwork for the case managers, including the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Authorization form, quarterly reports (when necessary), and follow-up forms from the LODESTAR system, which is a database developed for the AFLP agencies and enhanced to collect data on Cal-Learn for the state.

Traditional schools generally issue report cards four times per year. Case managers collect report cards for participants on their caseload in accordance with the schedule provided in the report card schedule form (CL8).<sup>13</sup> In some cases, report cards are obtained directly from the schools, in others they are obtained through the participants. The report card results are then sent to the Cal-Learn GSWs with the case managers' recommendation in each case for a bonus, a sanction, or no action required.

Supportive services, including child care, must be renewed every three months. Renewal is dependent on verification of the participant's enrollment in school and



requires that case managers complete additional paperwork (i.e. Transportation Request forms, Ancillary Request forms, and child care forms such as the PA-129 A, PA 129 B, and ST101), all of which must be sent to either GSWs or the Resource and Referral agencies within stipulated time limits. Case managers also assist participants and advocate on their behalf in instances when complications emerge with the Resource and Referral agencies and the child care referral process.

### **The Essential Role Played by Data Entry Personnel**

Case managers work closely with data entry personnel employed by the AFLP agencies. Data entry personnel have access to DPSS' GEARS system and the State's LODESTAR system. Virtually every form that the case managers complete, whether they are forms internal to the AFLP agencies, forms for DPSS, or forms for the State, are processed by the data entry personnel. In most cases, each separate office run by an AFLP agency employs one data entry worker.

### **Supportive Services**

Child care, transportation expenses, and ancillary expenses are available to Cal-Learn participants. In order to obtain these services, participants must be enrolled in school, and the case managers must provide enrollment verifications and service requests to the GSWs and Resource and Referral Agencies. In addition and where necessary, case managers can assist participants in accessing specialized supportive services for substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues.

### **Providing Teens with Child Care Services**

Case managers assist participants in accessing child care. The Resource and Referral agencies with which the County contracts to provide child care referral services for Cal-Learn participants are as follows: Center for Community and Family Services (Carson); Child Care Information Service (Greater Pasadena area); Child Care Resource Center (Van Nuys); Children's Home Society (Long Beach); Crystal Stairs (South Los Angeles); Connections for Children (West Los Angeles, Santa Monica, South Bay); Mexican-American Opportunity Foundation (Downey, Pico Rivera, Bell Gardens, Commerce); Options (Baldwin Park and surrounding communities); Pathways (Central and Downtown Los Angeles); and Pomona Unified School District (Pomona).

After submission of a participant's child care requisition to a Resource and Referral agency, either through the mail or via fax, the agency assigns its own case manager to the participant, and this additional child care case manager sends the participant a packet of forms within five work days. The participant is asked to return the forms to the Resource and Referral agency within 10 work days. Some of the Resource and Referral agencies run open houses designed to help participants correctly complete the forms in the child care packet. If the forms are correctly completed and returned to the Resource and Referral agency in a timely manner, the participant should be approved

and receive a child care referral within one month. The Resource and Referral agencies pay back child care to child care providers for up to 30 days.

### **Paying Transportation Expenses**

When Cal-Learn participants need transportation in order to attend school, whether they use public transportation or need gasoline expenses paid for private automobiles, arrangements can be made through the Cal-Learn case manager. Case managers send the GSWs transportation notices via GEARS, which request that transportation payments be made to the participants. DPSS uses TRANSTAR, a computerized mapping system, to determine eligibility for transportation expenses. Participants receive transportation payments from DPSS in the form of a monthly check. DPSS pays back transportation for up to 30 days to participants enrolled in and attending school.

### **Paying Ancillary Expenses**

Students attending high school or studying for a GED require books, supplies, lab fees, and testing fees, among other things. Cal-Learn participants are eligible to receive ancillary expenses to pay for these types of items. The case managers send GSWs documentation of the needed expenses, and DPSS sends the participants the payments in the form of a check.

### **GSW Responsibilities**

Since 1998, DPSS' Cal-Learn GSWs have been centralized in the El Monte GAIN Office.<sup>14</sup> Before 1998, one or two Cal-Learn GSWs worked in each GAIN region. Centralization took place in order to provide a uniform level of service to participants in all regions throughout the County. As of this writing, DPSS has 12 GSWs assigned to Cal-Learn. Each of these GSWs carries a caseload that hovers at or around 200 participants. Due to the downsizing of the number of GSWs assigned to Cal-Learn, and in spite of the overall decline in the number of teens participating in the program since January 2000, caseload sizes are up approximately 30 percent from the roughly 140 cases assigned to each GSW in 2000. As is the case with the AFLP case managers, the exact caseload composition and size for GSWs at any particular time is a function of participants entering and exiting the Cal-Learn program. Each GSW covers a geographical area or set of areas. Cal-Learn participants are assigned to GSWs based on the home zip code entered into GEARS.

Although Cal-Learn GSWs have virtually no direct interaction with the program's participants, they play an important part in the lives of these teens. For every participant in their caseload, GSWs must keep GEARS records up to date, reviewing each piece of official documentation that the AFLP agencies provide for DPSS. This

includes the report card schedules, the report cards themselves, the enrollment verifications, and the recommendations for bonuses and sanctions. GSWs must also process case de-registrations and participants who wish to open their own CalWORKs cases after they turn 18. Most importantly, Cal-Learn GSWs work with their supervisors (GSSs) and the Deputy overseeing the Cal-Learn program to gain approval of participant requests for transportation and ancillary expenses based on the criteria for receiving these services. Moreover, when documentation is incomplete (e.g. a start date is missing for a sanction or a school address is missing on a transportation requisition), the GSWs send checklists to the case managers indicating the omissions or mistakes, and they often make courtesy calls to the case managers as well in an effort to clear up any problems. Similar to the case managers, GSWs are asked to document every action they take with respect to the Cal-Learn program.

A number of GSWs travel once per month to AFLP offices on a voluntary basis. The purpose of these visits is to attend in-person to any difficulties that, for whatever reason, have not been dealt with through other channels of communication (fax, telephone, or the mail). These meetings also give GSWs an opportunity to clarify relevant DPSS policies and procedures regarding the Cal-Learn program and its documentation requirements. Some GSWs additionally conduct outreach efforts designed to heighten awareness of Cal-Learn among organizations dealing with potential participants so that eligible teens can be enrolled. Outreach presentations are made at schools, non-profit agencies, community organizations, and local offices for the Women Infants and Children (WIC) nutrition program. Presentations are also made internally within DPSS to GAIN staff, as well as to the County's Interagency Committee, which is composed of different agencies dealing with issues such as children's services and foster children.

### **GSSs, the Program Deputy, and Approval of Bonuses and Services**

Per the County Auditor-Controller, DPSS has recently implemented two and three-tier approval systems for bonuses and services. Recommendations for bonuses are subjected to a two-tier system in which GSWs must receive final approval for bonuses from their GSSs. Approval of transportation and ancillary expenses are also subjected to at least a two-tier approval system and, depending upon how long the participant in question has been in Cal-Learn, these services can be subjected to a three-tier system in which the GSW must receive final approval from both a GSS and the program Deputy overseeing Cal-Learn. These two and three-tier systems were implemented to increase oversight and prevent fraud.

### **Teen Responsibilities and Program Participation Requirements**

From the point of view of the Cal-Learn program, the main responsibility participants must fulfill is to attend high school (or a GED equivalency program) and make progress towards graduation. To meet this requirement, however, the teens must meet other responsibilities as well.

One such responsibility is completing the Cal-Learn Orientation appointment with the assigned case manager, as specified in the official Cal-Learn Orientation letter (CL1). At Orientation appointments, Cal-Learn case managers inform participants about the program and also assist the teens in starting the process of finding child care services so they can attend school. In order to use these services, case managers must submit the appropriate requisition to the Resource and Referral agencies, either during or immediately after the Orientation appointment. After receiving a child care packet from the Resource and Referral Agency handling the child care referral, participants have ten working days to send the completed forms back to the child care case manager the agency has assigned to them. At Orientation appointments, teens can also provide their Cal-Learn case managers with the information necessary for them to access transportation, ancillary expenses, and specialized supportive services for domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health issues.

In addition to the Orientation appointment, participants are required to meet with their Cal-Learn case managers on a regular basis. These meetings enable the teens to demonstrate that they are attending school regularly and to make arrangements for any needed services, including the renewal of their access to child care, transportation and ancillary expenses every three months. Although some case managers are able to obtain report cards directly from the schools, responsibility for turning the report cards into the case managers, in accordance with the report card schedule provided in form CL8, falls on the teens. Report cards are due no later than ten working days following their issuance by the schools.

## **Bonuses and Sanctions**

The strategy Cal-Learn uses in helping pregnant and parenting teens to earn a high school education combines intensive case management with a system of financial incentives. Program participants are rewarded for satisfactory progress in school and for graduation with financial bonuses, and they are penalized with financial sanctions for failure to attend school, failure to make adequate progress in school, and/or failure to submit report cards or progress reports on time.

## **The 90-Day Participation Period**

After entry into Cal-Learn, and once GEARS generates a description of Cal-Learn program requirements (CL2) and sends the form to the participant or CalWORKs payee, a 90-day participation period follows during which neither bonuses nor sanctions are applied. If a teen is exempted or terminated from the program during this period and then resumes participation after a period of less than 90 days, the days of the break in services do not count towards the participation period. If participation is resumed after a period of more than 90 days, the participant must repeat Orientation and a new 90-day participation period begins. Starting with the first report card issued after the 90-day participation period, each report card forms the basis for either a bonus, a sanction, or no action.

## **Awarding Bonuses for Satisfactory Progress in School**

Cal-Learn teens are eligible for up to four bonuses of \$100 each during any twelve-month period for any report card indicating a grade point average of 2.0 or better.<sup>15</sup> In order to receive the \$100 bonus, participants making satisfactory progress in school must turn their report cards in to their case managers on time. Data entry personnel at the AFLP agencies enter the report card information into GEARS along with the case managers' recommendations for financial bonuses. After evaluating the case managers' recommendations and accompanying documentation, GSWs must obtain authorization for bonuses from their GSSs. The bonuses for satisfactory progress are added to the CalWORKs payee's cash aid, which means that Cal-Learn teens living with their parents (nested teens) do not receive these bonuses directly.

Cal-Learn participants can also earn a one-time bonus of \$500 for graduating high school or receiving an equivalent certificate. Unlike the bonuses for satisfactory progress, graduation bonuses are paid directly to the Cal-Learn participant, even if the participants are still living with their parents at the time of graduation.

## **Sanctions**

Sanctions of \$100 or \$50 are imposed on Cal-Learn participants who either fail to turn in report cards without good cause, submit report cards late, or make unsatisfactory progress in school. A sanction of \$100 is imposed on participants who fail to make adequate or satisfactory progress in school without good cause, or who fail to submit a report card within 20 working days. A sanction of \$50 is imposed on participants who make adequate or satisfactory progress in school but submit their report cards late, or who show good cause for making unsatisfactory progress.

The Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies initiate the Cal-Learn program's noncompliance/sanctions process, passing the necessary paperwork along to the data entry personnel, who in turn enter the information into the GEARS noncompliance screen along with recommendations for sanctions. GEARS generates the *Cal-Learn Notice of Participation Problem* (CL3) and sends the form to the participant. (A copy of this form is provided in Appendix D). The appointment with the case manager provides the participant with an opportunity to show good cause for the noncompliance. If the participant fails to show for the noncompliance appointment, the case manager must continue the sanction process, recording the results of the appointment in GEARS. The GSWs evaluate the information provided by case managers and make the final determination as to whether or not to sanction a teen. Similarly to the bonus process, financial penalties resulting from sanctions are deducted from the CalWORKs payee's cash assistance, which means that penalties are not directly imposed on nested teens.

## **No Action Taken**

When Cal-Learn teens make adequate progress in school, which is usually indicated by a report card showing a 1.0 grade point average (a "D" average), case managers

recommend that no action be taken, meaning that neither bonuses nor sanctions should be imposed on the participants in question.

## **Closing Cases**

Cal-Learn participants are de-registered from the Cal-Learn program for any one of the following reasons: (1) They earn their high school diploma or equivalency certificate; (2) they turn 19 and decline the option to continue in the program until they graduate or turn 20; (3) they are no longer pregnant or a custodial parent; (4) they no longer receive CalWORKs directly or, in the case of nested teens, their parents/guardians are deregistered from CalWORKs.

To de-register Cal-Learn participants, GSWs must obtain the appropriate documentation, either from the case managers or directly from the GEARS system. If a participant graduates, for example, the GSW must receive a copy of the participant's high school diploma, GED certificate, or certificate of proficiency. If the participant is no longer pregnant or a custodial parent, the GSW generally receives information to this effect from the case manager as well. GEARS automatically alerts the GSWs when participants in their caseloads turn 19 (or 20 for participants who voluntarily continue beyond age 19), or when participants are no longer in receipt of CalWORKs aid. When the GSWs receive the documentation for de-registering a case, they enter an end date and a de-registration code into GEARS and send the de-registered participant a Cal-Learn Exit Notice.

## **County Performance Outcome Measures for the AFLP Agencies**

In an effort to maintain satisfactory levels of performance, the County's Cal-Learn case management contracts with the AFLP agencies link financial bonuses and penalties to four performance outcome measures and targets: (i) Rate of newly enrolled Cal-Learn teens that have attended Cal-Learn Orientation (70 percent); (ii) rate of school enrollment for all teens that have completed Cal-Learn Orientation (60 percent); (iii) rate of report cards received for all Cal-Learn participants that are enrolled in school (50 percent); (iv) rate of high school completion for all Cal-Learn participants that have completed 11<sup>th</sup> grade and are enrolled in school (50 percent).

The AFLP agencies are awarded \$100 bonuses for each percentage point by which their performance exceeds the target rates the County has set for each outcome measure. At the same time, \$100 penalties are deducted from payments to the agencies for each percentage point by which their performance falls below the target rates.<sup>16</sup> The use of these measures to maintain satisfactory performance requires that the Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies complete additional, detailed documentation to validate outcomes.

## **Conclusion: A Program Built on Interdependent Responsibilities**

A successful experience in Cal-Learn culminates with the teen participant earning a high school diploma or its equivalent. But this outcome is not merely dependent on the will and effort of the program's participants. For teens to be Cal-Learn success stories, their efforts must dovetail with those of parents and guardians, community groups, schools, Resource and Referral agencies and, of course, the staff specializing in Cal-Learn at the AFLP agencies and at DPSS.

Identification of eligible teens requires well-trained EWs at DPSS who are aware of Cal-Learn and knowledgeable about the program's requirements. GSWs and AFLP case managers must also work cooperatively and engage in outreach efforts at schools and community organizations. Teens, in turn, cannot participate in the program without first completing the Orientation appointment with their case manager. While attendance at this appointment is the responsibility of the teens themselves (and their parents/guardians in the case of nested teens), the likelihood that they will participate in an Orientation increases if staff at the AFLP agencies reinforce the official DPSS appointment notices with more down-to-earth letters that point out the benefits of the program in easy-to-understand terms. These types of letters serve to humanize the case managers and the overall program process.

Cal-Learn teens are expected to attend school regularly, and the likelihood that they will do so increases when they are able to draw on strong family support systems and/or supportive community organizations. But participant capacity to attend school is also dependent on access to services, and this access requires coordinated efforts on the part of case managers and data entry personnel at the AFLP agencies, GSWs and their supervisors at DPSS, and the child care case managers at the Resource and Referral agencies. None of these parties can facilitate access to services without the efforts of the others, nor can any one of them do much for the teens if the teens themselves are not motivated to succeed and conscientious enough to continually follow Cal-Learn procedures and meet the program's participant requirements.

However, the efforts of the staff within the various organizations working with Cal-Learn can substantially enhance the program participants' preexisting levels of motivation. Case managers must be a continual source of support and inspiration to the teens, both during regularly scheduled meetings and through availability for consultation between these meetings. They must serve as mentors, counselors, advocates, and program experts with the ability to communicate with the other organizations involved with Cal-Learn. The case managers must also help participants access services and be able to handle large volumes of paperwork on a continuous basis. At the same time, GSWs must be sympathetic and responsive to the needs of the participants in their caseload and continually available for communication with case managers and data entry personnel to ensure that teens are following program procedures, fulfilling program requirements, and receiving the services that are a precondition for their attendance in school. Similarly to GSWs and the Cal-Learn case managers, child care case managers at the Resource and Referral agencies must be equipped to handle

large caseloads and to respond to requisitions in a timely manner. The schools must provide a welcoming environment for Cal-Learn, cooperating with the program's participants and their case managers and providing schedules and documentation as needed.<sup>17</sup>

When all these parties and organizations involved with Cal-Learn do their parts in an expeditious manner, the program ends with its participants proudly wearing their caps and gowns on graduation day. The teens are awarded a high school diploma or its equivalent, and rewarded directly with the Cal-Learn program's \$500 graduation bonus. In a number of successful cases, participants have been joined at the graduation ceremony, not only by family and friends, but also by their case managers and other staff from the AFLP agencies, as well as their GSWs from DPSS. It is a joyous occasion for all because each has made a significant contribution to improving the young parent's life and future prospects.



## **Chapter 3**

### **Person-Level Barriers Impeding Program Participation and Preventing Favorable Outcomes**

#### **Two Sets of Barriers**

The concluding section of the previous chapter attempts to capture the Cal-Learn program in *ideal* terms, which is to say the way the program process works when no barriers impede Cal-Learn teens from participation. Under real-life circumstances, however, two general sets of barriers often stand in the way of participant progress. One set of impediments, which will be discussed in this chapter, is person-level barriers, or barriers that come from the participants themselves and their families, and which often derive additional strength as barriers from the communities in which the participants live. A second set of barriers, which will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this report, is program-level barriers, or barriers that result from the way Cal-Learn is organized and administered as a program. Although these two sets of barriers are analyzed separately for the purpose of clarity, it is important to keep in mind that they frequently both impinge on Cal-Learn participants at the same time.

#### **Sources and Methods**

Two sources of data—one qualitative, the other quantitative—were collected, and two different but complementary methodologies were used to prepare the chapters on Cal-Learn barriers for this report. In January and February of 2006, the Research and Evaluation Services (RES) unit collected qualitative data in focus group interviews with AFLP program directors, Cal-Learn case managers at all four AFLP agencies, and Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS.<sup>18</sup> In March 2006, quantitative data was collected through a short survey RES administered to all Cal-Learn case managers. The survey instrument and the response distributions for each survey question, as well as additional information on how the survey and focus groups were conducted, is provided in Appendix C.

#### **How to Interpret Focus Group Methods and Findings**

Focus group interviews are moderated, in-depth discussions of a predetermined topic that involve a small group of people who have something in common. For this report, the discussions in the focus group interviews focused on the experiences case managers, program directors, and GSWs have with the day-to-day operation of the Cal-Learn program. Focus group participants from each of these groups were asked to talk about their work duties and the working relationships they have with Cal-Learn teens and with other organizations involved in the program. Focus group participants

were also asked about the challenges they face in attempting to meet their work responsibilities, and they were asked to identify points at which the administration and organization of the program inadvertently creates barriers that impede the progress teens are able to make in school. Along with this, focus group participants were asked to offer any recommendations they might have as to how the functionality of the Cal-Learn program might be improved. To protect their privacy, the names of all focus group participants have been changed.

The next two chapters draw extensively on observations offered in focus group interviews. In reading these observations, it should be noted that participants are literally speaking in their own words, and that everyday, unrehearsed speech is very different from grammatically correct text. The objective of focus groups is to capture the spontaneity and unedited insight of an informal discussion. This means that, given the open, nonjudgmental atmosphere required to elicit information and the assurance of privacy protected by state and federal laws, participants sometimes make dramatic and critical remarks. In accordance with best practices and accepted conventions for reporting focus group results, participants' words are quoted verbatim with minimal editing.

To correctly interpret the focus group findings offered in this chapter and Chapter 4, it is important to understand the advantages and limitations of the qualitative approach guiding focus group research, as well as the way in which this approach provides information that differs from, but can complement, information provided through quantitative methodologies. Focus group findings provide elaborated, qualitative information that is unavailable through statistics – for this report, the interviews provided an in-depth exploration of perceptions and experiences with the Cal-Learn program and a concrete sense of how things happen in the daily lives of the people who work closely with the program and its participants. Focus groups also hold the possibility of discovering new information that may not have been previously known through the use of other methods of inquiry.

However, in interpreting focus group interviews, readers must understand that they have important limitations. While the focus groups conducted for this report help to humanize the Cal-Learn program process, focus group participants may not be representative of all people carrying out similar duties. Focus groups provide neither generalization nor verification of findings. However, the objective of focus group research is not to verify what participants say, but rather to tap experiences and perceptions that may affect their work and involvement with the Cal-Learn program; that is, neither verification nor generalization are primary research goals of focus group research. Nonetheless, a degree of generalization can be achieved when focus group and survey findings converge and agree.

### **The case manager survey**

The survey data collected for this study is used to fill gaps and amplify points of interest emerging out of the focus group interviews. Of the 69 Cal-Learn case managers

working at the four AFLP agencies at the time of this writing, 63 responded to the survey conducted for this study, an overall response rate of roughly 93 percent. The surveys and focus groups should therefore be interpreted as sources of data that, in combination with each other, reveal patterns and tendencies in the daily experiences of Cal-Learn staff at the AFLP agencies and DPSS.

## **Person-Level Barriers: Economic and Social Impediments**

Remarks Cal-Learn case managers and GSWs made during focus group interviews point to two general types of person-level barriers that prevent or impair program participation: (i) Economic barriers, which are conditions that emerge out of poverty and/or the economically disadvantaged position of Cal-Learn participants; (ii) Social barriers, which are a byproduct of the everyday relationships Cal-Learn participants have with their families, their peers and teachers in school, and the people and institutions in their communities.

### **Economic Barriers**

#### ***When the immediate need for income trumps the long-term need for education***

The economic hardships Cal-Learn participants face are all the more daunting because these teens are simultaneously confronted with the challenge of parenthood, which itself can be especially difficult for them insofar as they are not yet fully prepared to be parents. Betty, a Cal-Learn case manager at one of the AFLP agencies, was particularly clear in describing the general life circumstances Cal-Learn teens must negotiate:

“A lot of our teens are from different lifestyles. Their homes aren’t stable, the living conditions aren’t favorable, there is welfare, they’re relying on the little money they’re getting from welfare to survive, and there’s a child.”

These circumstances become even more overwhelming when the cash assistance provided through CalWORKs falls short of what is necessary for families to make ends meet. Cal-Learn participants then find themselves grappling with conflicting responsibilities. Christina, another case manager, underscores the conflict with the following example:

“I went to a client to get a LODESTAR [update] and a sanction because she is not in school. After I did the paperwork, I sat for an hour and talked to her about how hard it is to be a head of household. Her parents died. The father [of her child] is incarcerated, and she is responsible for her younger sister. She works, so right now school is not a priority for her.”

Another case manager, Ginger, described similar circumstances she sees in her work with Cal-Learn teens:

"I have male clients with two kids. Their priority is to get a job to help support their families. Some clients say, 'I don't want to enroll in school.' I don't press the issue."

Cal-Learn participants—especially those that are not living with their CalWORKs parents and have opened their own CalWORKs cases—are therefore often unable to attend school due to the more immediate need they have to provide support for their children. Moreover, child care issues can introduce an additional dimension to economically-oriented conflicts, particularly if young mothers are unwilling or unable to leave their babies with the available child care providers and, at the same time, the parents or family members work and are therefore unable to care for the babies while the teens attend school. Jackie, a case manager serving the South Bay, notes that sometimes she has "clients whose mother [said], 'I don't need her to go to school, I need her to take care of her child.'" Gina, a case manager in the San Gabriel Valley, pointed to a slightly different but closely related problem:

"A lot of [participants] are not enrolled in school because of child care. They don't have anybody, they don't trust sending the child to a child care center. That's what we see with our teens. They don't know what the child care center is like, that's one challenge."

Under these types of circumstances, then, the choice between school and work/income is either replaced or made more complicated by a conflict between child care needs and the requirement to attend school.

### ***When unstable housing situations complicate or prevent Cal-Learn participation***

Economically disadvantaged families are often forced to grapple with unstable housing situations. Financial shortfalls can lead to eviction or simply the inability to find an affordable place to live at all. Under the best circumstances, families faced with this type of situation either find shelters or generous friends and relatives willing to make room in their own residences. However, such arrangements are usually temporary. Under far worse circumstances, the family may become homeless. While the majority of Cal-Learn teens are not homeless, it is important to note that slightly less than one quarter of the respondents to the case manager survey said they have no homeless teens in their caseload. At the same time, more than two-thirds of the survey respondents said that under one-quarter of the teens in their caseloads are homeless, and close to 7 percent said that between one quarter and one half of their caseloads are homeless.

Whether it results in homelessness or not, an unstable housing situation acts as a major barrier to Cal-Learn program participation in a number of ways. As discussed in Chapter 2, the functionality of Cal-Learn is largely dependent on communication, including communication between case managers and participants, and between DPSS and participants. This communication tends to break down when Cal-Learn teens are confronted with housing instability. Itinerant Cal-Learn participants often have no choice but to give a DPSS address (i.e. a CalWORKs District Office) as their mailing address, which makes it unlikely that they will receive official notices from DPSS or follow-up letters from AFLP agencies. Or, if participants provide a standard residential address, it

may no longer be their address by the time mailings arrive. Housing instability also makes it exceedingly difficult to contact participants on the telephone or through personalized home visits.

It should also be pointed out here that, while the distribution of cash aid through debit cards has facilitated the access CalWORKs participants have to their assistance, this method of distribution also often inadvertently makes it more difficult to communicate with these participants, including those in the Cal-Learn program, because they no longer have to pick up checks—and other mailings—at a real and relatively stable mailing address. Josephine, one of DPSS' Cal-Learn GSWs, captured the communication problems connected to housing instability:

“A lot of our PTs [participants] are homeless, or they have a DPSS address. It doesn't mean they are homeless, it just means they do not have a stable address. This affects them to go to school. The case manager cannot reach them to do an Orientation.”

Toni, a case manager working with Cal-Learn teens in the San Fernando Valley, rounds out this picture in describing some of the challenges she faces in her work:

“I have a caseload with 5 or 6 people and I cannot find them. We need help from DPSS and from GAIN to help us locate these people. I am going to call the GSW and give the basic stuff on these clients, but I don't know what school she goes to, there is no home, I don't have any information...”

Along with communication difficulties, housing instability acts as a barrier to Cal-Learn participation in a more fundamental way. Barbara, a Cal-Learn case manager working in East Los Angeles, explained this with the following remarks:

“The focus of Cal-Learn is to graduate from high school, but if they don't live in a peaceful household sometimes the focus is on getting them out of that household. Or they may be homeless. We have clients who are technically homeless but they live with friends, so they have a DPSS address. They may live with different people every week. We spend a lot of time trying to get them into a transitional home or with a relative, where they are stable.”

Just as economic hardship in general sometimes forces Cal-Learn participants to prioritize immediate financial needs over the more long-term benefits education will presumably bring, housing instability in particular, and especially homelessness, places the need to find shelter ahead of the requirement to go to school.

## **Social Barriers**

### ***When family history, family priorities and cultural values clash with case management and program participation***

In responding to the survey conducted for this report, 46.7 percent of Cal-Learn case managers indicated that between one quarter and one half of the teens in their caseloads are not academically prepared for high school, and close to another third (31.7 percent) indicated that between 51 and 75 percent of their caseloads were not

academically prepared. While an additional 8.3 percent of respondents placed the proportion of unprepared students in their caseloads at less than 25 percent, only 3.3 percent of respondents said they have no unprepared participants in their caseload. Related to this, a number of case managers in focus group interviews said that the goals and strategies informing the program are sometimes at odds with the way participants and their families have always lived their lives. Consuelo, a case manager in the San Fernando Valley, offered especially instructive remarks:

“The biggest challenge is to get [the teens] to enroll in school. We are dealing with a low-income population, when their parents have not gone to school. It is very challenging when we have a client and for weeks we try to convince them to get their education when their family members have not been educated. Even when they enroll in school they do not turn in their report card. How can we succeed or overcome situations like that when they were told all their lives that education is not important? They don’t have any role models and we are supposed to turn all that around in a few months? That’s a big challenge. I try to be as supportive as I can, but when I see that someone is like talking to a wall, it’s not that easy. It is the population that we are dealing with. It’s not just the teen but generations and generations, and we have to change their lifestyle. I have teen parents that were born in the U.S. but do not speak any English, yet they are in Cal-Learn.”

Jennifer, who provides intensive case management to Cal-Learn participants in the Antelope Valley, adds to this picture:

“A lot of our girls have low self-esteem and they haven’t had positive role models. These are issues that have to be dealt with before school can even be addressed. How can you get someone who became pregnant at the age of 13 and now is 17-years-old and never been to school, and you say ‘Go to school, go to school, go to school’. This girl is out of the loop and hasn’t been to school. So we have a lot of things that haven’t been dealt with before you push the school thing...What we look at as an unhealthy environment, that is all they know. This is their way of life. ‘I did not know that there is any other way.’ So it is difficult for us, the case managers, to walk in and change the patterns that have been set in place for years. I am not talking the years of life of the client. I am talking for years and years. It is generational, because the parents. So it is a very difficult task.”

Along with family indifference to education and the absence of role models, cultural values can pose complications for case managers as they try to carry out their responsibilities. Benjamin, a case manager serving the Hollywood area, pointed to the delicate family issues case managers can be forced to confront in attempting to speak with Cal-Learn teens and their families:

“[Participants] have cultural barriers that prevent them from exploring beyond what they know. I am a Mexican American and it is taboo to speak about sex...They end up pregnant and they don’t know how. At home they can’t speak about this or that.”

Cultural issues become especially complicated for case managers in connection with efforts to ensure that Cal-Learn teens do not have more unplanned pregnancies in the future. In their survey responses, roughly 36 percent of the case managers said that between one quarter and one half of their Cal-Learn caseloads consist of teens living in families that are not supportive of the program’s goals regarding family planning. While 41.4 percent of the respondents put the proportion living in such families at less than

25 percent, 12 percent said that they had no such teens in their caseload. Maxine, a case manager in Hollywood, offered more detailed comments in an example she provided in a focus group interview:

“I had a 13-year-old girl who got pregnant and was given birth control, and a year and a half later she came in here and she was pregnant again. Her mom came in here happy that her child is pregnant again. All I could say is congratulations. [But] she is failing out of school, she has a learning disability.”

In more general comments regarding conversations between case managers and participants, Maxine also noted that,

“We can go through family traditions, religion, beliefs. I can say one thing and their mom can say another...[Y]ou have to talk birth control but as a minor they answer to their parents, and I have to be mindful of their parents.”

Accepted lifestyle patterns, often ingrained and bolstered over several family generations, can pose serious barriers to the capacity Cal-Learn teens have to follow program requirements and to the ability case managers have to provide teens with intensive case management. As case managers attempt to encourage participants to attend school and obtain their basic education, they can find themselves confronting rooted ways of life in which education is not a priority, as well as cultural values that contradict other program goals. When this occurs, case managers are themselves placed in a position where they must carefully negotiate the opposition between their responsibilities to the Cal-Learn program and their sensitivity to other sources of authority in the lives of participants.

### ***When mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues stand in the way of program participation***

Responses given to the case manager survey suggest that significant proportions of Cal-Learn teens face problems related to mental health issues. Asked what proportion of their caseloads need services to deal with these issues, 23.7 percent of the survey respondents placed the number between 25 and 50 percent. While 47.5 percent of the respondents said less than one quarter of their caseloads required such services, only 8.5 percent said no participants in their caseloads required such services. Furthermore, 41.7 percent of survey respondents agreed “somewhat”, and another 33.3 percent agreed “strongly”, that some teens in their caseload have undiagnosed or untreated learning disabilities that contribute to their lack of success in school.

Smaller—though noteworthy—proportions of the respondents to the case manager survey indicated that participants in their caseloads are in need of services for substance abuse and domestic violence. Close to 17 percent of the survey respondents said they had no participants in need of substance abuse services; 64.4 percent said less than one quarter of their caseloads needed such services; 12 percent placed this proportion at between one quarter and one half of their caseloads. In terms of domestic violence, 25 percent of the survey respondents said they had no participants in their caseloads in need of services for such issues; close to

47 percent of the respondents said that less than one quarter of the participants in their caseload needed domestic violence services; 20 percent of the respondents said between one-quarter and one-half of their participants were in need of services for such issues.

While Cal-Learn teens therefore do not appear to struggle with mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues in overwhelming numbers, the proportion of program participants who have problems in these areas cannot be ignored. Furthermore, participants who might benefit from treatment for these problems are often reluctant to do so. "If you leave it up to [the participants]," one AFLP director said, "they may chicken out before their appointment." In a similar vein, a case manager serving the South Bay and South Los Angeles gave an example of a Cal-Learn participant who was a victim of rape: "She is closed to counseling services. She is not ready for counseling if I talk to her. 'Don't go there.'"

Responses given to questions posed in the case manager survey amplify these remarks in a more general way. When asked to explain why they have problems linking Cal-Learn teens with mental health services, more than half (51.7 percent) of the case managers surveyed responded that "teens don't want service"; 43.1 percent of the respondents gave the same answer when asked to explain why they have problems linking teens with substance abuse services; 32.2 percent responded the same way when asked why they have problems linking teens with domestic violence services.

However, even when domestic violence, mental health and substance abuse problems are identified, acknowledged and treated, they tend to act as barriers to school attendance. Margaret, a case manager in the South Bay, offered an example that provides an understanding of the difficulties participants with these types of problems face:

"My high risk case, she's 14, she has a baby, she has mental health problems. She's already been in jail or juvenile hall...She's diagnosed with depression, however she's not taking her medication. She's tried to commit suicide twice...She occasionally is a substance abuser, and she's only 14, and her mother does not help her out at all. I do not consider her mom supportive."

Such an array of serious problems makes it difficult for a teen to function in any social context, let alone a school context requiring a modicum of focus, commitment and discipline. Even when these types of problems are less multi-faceted, they can still be equally debilitating. "We deal with depressed kids," a case manager working in the San Fernando Valley said in one of the focus group sessions. "They cannot go to school like that. Sometimes they can't get out of bed in the morning they are so depressed."

It should also be pointed out that when domestic violence, mental health problems and substance abuse issues are combined with poverty and the daily threat of crime closely connected to life in poor neighborhoods, the joint force of these barriers to school attendance becomes all the more difficult for Cal-Learn teens to surmount. Maxine, a



case manager working in Hollywood, pointed to this interaction between barriers in noting that,

“Most of the girls who come in to Orientation, 75 percent of them say they do not go to school. They are dealing with domestic violence, abusive parents, neighborhoods they do not want to go out after 4pm, and this is the time to go home from school.”

### ***When Cal-Learn teens do not speak or read English***

The design of the Cal-Learn program can break down in cases where participants have little or no ability to speak or read English. English language limitations can cause problems both in communicating with participants and in the ability participants have to learn in school and complete school assignments. Maria, a case manager working in Hollywood and Central Los Angeles, points out that, “A lot of [our clients are] first generation teens, and I ask them, ‘what school did you go to?’ They are all L.A. schools, but they do not speak English, which is a huge barrier if they are required to complete school work.”

Similarly to problems related to mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues, results from the case manager survey suggest that, while language barriers are not a problem for an overwhelming proportion of Cal-Learn participants, the problem is common enough to merit some attention. The proportion of respondents who said that no participants in their caseloads have English language limitations (23.7 percent) was roughly equal to the proportion who said that between one quarter and one half of their participants have such limitations (22.2 percent). Additionally, while 8.5 percent of the respondents said between 51 and 75 percent of their caseloads had language limitations, 45.8 percent placed the proportion of their caseloads facing these barriers at less than 25 percent.

Barriers to communication with Cal-Learn participants will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. However, it should be mentioned here that participants with language barriers and/or limited reading skills face an added challenge when it comes to understanding some of the official Cal-Learn notices they receive in the mail. Penelope is a case manager serving East Los Angeles, and she notes that,

“Generally speaking, the client reading ability is of fourth or fifth grade level, so they do not understand the [Orientation] letter. A lot of the teens cannot read, [and] if they read it’s a very wordy letter. Some of them speak Spanish and the letter is mailed in English, so the letter means nothing to them because they do not speak English and the parent [can speak but] cannot read Spanish.”

## **Conclusion: Person-Level Barriers and Program Performance**

The duties with which Cal-Learn workers are charged, both at the AFLP agencies and DPSS, go well beyond the simple procurement of services for the purpose of facilitating school attendance. In order to actively assist teens in neutralizing and surmounting barriers to school attendance, case managers, GSWs, and all other staff involved in the

organization and administration of Cal-Learn, must be able to grasp the difficult life situations participants bring to the program. In understanding these situations, moreover, case managers, in particular, frequently arrive at the realization that school and education cannot always be the top priority in the lives of Cal-Learn teens. As a program director at one of the AFLP agencies put things, “a lot of our clients are down here in this hole. They are not close to [the starting] step, and we cannot get them to this step until we get them out of this hole.”

But for all the difficult work involved in helping participants overcome barriers, it is the part of the Cal-Learn program that is in many ways the least amenable to conventional performance measurement. In numerous cases, the outcome of this work may not lead immediately to school attendance or progress towards graduation, but this does not make the substance of the work any less valuable. The use of survey data in combination with focus group interviews provides a window into the person-level impediments Cal-Learn workers must help participants overcome on a daily basis. This fusion of methods, in turn, has generated information that can inform policy enhancements, but will also help place future attempts to measure program performance in a proper context.

This chapter has attempted to show the economic and social barriers that, along with the responsibilities of parenthood, impede the ability Cal-Learn teens have to attend school regularly and stand in the way of progress towards graduation. Cal-Learn teens are often placed in positions where the family need for income and/or the need to find stable housing take priority over the long-term need for education. Furthermore, when participants struggle with unstable housing situations, including spells of homelessness, it becomes difficult if not impossible for either case managers or GSWs to find them and communicate with them.

Economic barriers to program participation become more difficult to overcome when they are combined with social barriers such as English language limitations and problems connected to domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health. In addition, case managers participating in focus group interviews noted that Cal-Learn participants often come from family situations where the pursuit of education has never been valued, and little if any family encouragement is given to the teens to attend school. One case manager noted that, “As the case manager, you are part of [the participants’] support system. Most of the times you are their only support system.” Making matters even more complicated, as this chapter has shown, case managers are sometimes confronted with situations in which program requirements, such as school attendance, and program objectives, such as preventing repeated pregnancies, clash with values and priorities held by the families of Cal-Learn participants. For case managers, there is no easy solution to these types of ambiguous circumstances, and the ways they respond sometimes come down to their perception of what will best serve the teen, even if the action they take will not necessarily be positively reflected in performance measures.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Program-Level Barriers Impeding Program Participation and Favorable Outcomes**

#### **Barriers and Policy Enhancements**

Cal-Learn teens come to the program with person-level problems that can impede their ability to attend school. Cal-Learn is designed to be a support system that helps participants negotiate these barriers in a positive way, though the scope of the economic and social circumstances blocking participant progress in school often goes well beyond what is possible for Cal-Learn to change single-handedly. By extension, the policy enhancements and changes that can be made in an effort to make Cal-Learn more responsive to person-level barriers are somewhat limited. Program-level barriers, on the other hand, are more amenable to policy enhancements. This chapter looks at program-level barriers within Cal-Learn and seeks to lay a foundation for policymakers to make changes in areas where the organization and administration of the program has unintended consequences, hindering the progress participants can potentially make in school. To be sure, some organizational and administrative problems will be easier and more feasible to change than others. But even limited steps taken to deal with these types of problems can be expected to improve Cal-Learn outcomes in the future.

#### **Four Types of Program-Level Barriers**

Remarks made in interviews with Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies, AFLP program directors, and Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS, point to four types of inter-related program-level barriers that impede the ability Cal-Learn teens have to make progress in school: (i) Workload issues for case managers and GSWs; (ii) communication and coordination breakdowns between DPSS, the AFLP agencies, the Resource and Referral agencies, school systems, and participants; (iii) delays and gaps in the availability of supportive services, and problems with the distribution of bonuses; (iv) the rigidity of program rules and procedures, and the emphasis given to documentation and performance measurement. As mentioned earlier, results from a short survey conducted with case managers are used to amplify and complement insights gained from the focus group interviews. The survey instrument and the response distribution for each survey question are provided in Appendix C.

## Workload Issues

### *Cal-Learn Case managers at the AFLP Agencies*

Cal-Learn case managers typically have caseloads consisting of between 33 and 40 participants. More than three-quarters (76.3 percent) of those surveyed answered “yes” to a question that asked them if they feel their caseloads are too large to provide the teens with the intensive case management they need. At the same time, focus group interviews provided an interesting variety of opinions on the topic of caseload size. One case manager serving Hollywood and central Los Angeles noted that, “It may seem that 33 [teens] is not a lot, [but] we are dealing with 33 families and not 33 individuals. It is everything that comes with it—babies, families, and issues.” Another case manager, Benjamin, who works in the same geographic region, offered more extensive comments, painting a picture of a dauntingly large and often harrowing workload:

“At the beginning of the month they ask us to do a six months follow-up per client. You have to go find the client. At the same time, you are doing the report card schedule, you are doing the verification, at the same time you have to document everything. You have to see [clients] once a month. Here in the agency they require us to sit through a staff meeting every week for an hour to two hours. They require us to have a case conference for two hours once a week. They also ask us to do outreach to go to the community and get new clients, and to facilitate a group at [a high school], which takes about two hours a week. We have to do supervision for two hours, and we have to do training once a week every Friday. We also have to do paperwork. How much time do we have left for our clients? It is so difficult with all the paperwork. When I do home visits, I want to stay in the area. We are jumping through gates, going through those secure buildings, going through dogs, and we go in hallways that reek of alcohol and urine. You go through the L.A. traffic. You go to these areas where they live, you knock on their door, the door practically falls off when you knock on it. You get back to the office, and I have to chart every home visit. It is a lot.”

On numerous occasions, case managers pointed to the amount of time they spend completing paperwork. The problems caused by the emphasis placed on documentation will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. However, it is useful here to draw attention to points of view in which the paperwork issue overlaps with questions surrounding workload burden. Mary, a case manager serving the San Gabriel Valley, made the following observations:

“[Cal-Learn wants] us to be more accountable, and to see where the money is going, and when there is less money to go around they start looking at how to increase caseloads, and they hire less and less people. That’s what happened with GAIN services. They cut back on the services and gave [the GSWs] more cases, and you lose something in the process...If we have 30 clients [as opposed to 40] we can give them more attention, we can have a better relationship, we can talk to them more on a regular basis, [and] have a positive relationship with them. With limited time we are concentrating on paperwork. [We tell the teens] we will see you when we see you, and I am sorry that you have this problem, but good luck with it.”

Jennifer, a case manager in the Antelope Valley, echoes this, pointing out that, “The high caseload we have [involves] a lot of monitoring and lots of paperwork...There is not

a lot of time...to build the relationship and maintain it.” Similarly, Maxine, a case manager serving Hollywood, made the following comments:

“I have a caseload of 33 and I have to see every client once a month. This month I had six LODESTAR [updates] and 12 report cards due. When you have this paperwork that is due, it is hard to be intense with clients. I would prefer less paperwork and more intensive case management with the caseload being so high. I had back-to-back appointments, and a situation where the client and parent and the sister [were] having issues. I was in a counseling session. I am also required to do my paperwork, so the time with my next client had to be shortened. A lot of times clients have transportation issues and do not want to come to our office, so I go to them. It is really hard when I have to do the paperwork.”

Several case managers interviewed for this study, however, felt that their workloads were not excessive or overwhelming. Roberta, a case manager in the San Fernando Valley, said the following: “I have 40 in my caseload. The number of caseload is fine. I don’t think that’s a big challenge.” Similarly, Jackie, who primarily serves South Los Angeles, said, “I have 40 clients. I try to see them once every other month. Some clients I see every month if they are pregnant or they are high risk. I have no problem with 40.” Another case manager, Gina, who works in South Los Angeles and the South Bay, also feels that her caseload is not excessive or overwhelming:

“Your caseload goes up and down. If you close a few [cases], then you may get new ones. Your caseload is changing. You prioritize your cases. You have some cases that you contact more, so it depends. Having 40 is okay. I have 39, but they’re not [all] active cases. I have one high-risk girl. It’s okay for me.”

### ***Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS***

GSWs, as well as the handful of case managers who commented on the issue, were virtually unanimous in their view that GSW caseloads are overwhelmingly large. Claudia, a GSW, offered a vivid description of the GSW caseload and the pressure that comes with the overall GSW workload:

“My caseload is 203 and it is overwhelming. We have to do a lot of things that are time consuming. Who’s terminated and who’s not—it takes at least an hour to check the list. Then there is updating the system...Approving benefits, bonuses, transportation, ancillaries... A lot of case managers calling with different cases, different problems that we have to deal with. It is very time consuming...It is a never-ending process...We do outreach...We go to job fairs...[W]e are constantly out of the office, so 200 cases is a lot of cases. It is overwhelming. In 1995 we had few [participants] that actually participated in the program. [But now] because of the new awareness, they want to take advantage of the program, so we have a lot more [participants] requesting transportation, ancillaries, school supplies. So we have a lot of requests and more [participants], and more sanctions, too...[E]verything is more demanding, and that is very difficult with so many requests. On a weekly basis, I receive more new cases. I don’t think in the last year I was under 196, 206, 203 cases. That is very stressful because everything has to be done on time.”

As noted in Chapter 2, DPSS has downsized the number of GSWs working on the Cal-Learn program. There are currently 12 GSWs serving the County’s Cal-Learn

population, and the caseload size per GSW has increased by about 30 percent, from 140 to 200, since 2000. In addition, since 1995 a number of steps have been added to the procedures GSWs must follow in completing their duties. For example, the approval of benefits such as transportation expenses now involves coordination with GSSs and the program Deputy, as well as use of computerized mapping software to calculate travel distances and expenses. As a result, GSWs not only have larger caseloads but also more work to do per participant. Furthermore, GSWs noted that there is now a proposal afoot to further reduce the number of GSWs working on Cal-Learn from 12 to 9, a move that would likely increase the caseload for each of the remaining GSWs by an additional 25 percent. Ronald, a Cal-Learn GSW, said the following:

“The past year or more, every time a GSW left, got promoted, or went on leave, the cases were just dispersed among us instead of getting a new worker. We did not know if they were coming back, so if somebody came back then we were able to give back [cases] to that person. Lancaster was covered by one case worker [GSW] for two years, so she had 250 [cases] for a very long time.”

Frank, another GSW, also made noteworthy remarks on this issue:

“As far as the program, it has evolved and all of us have been talking about the extra steps we now take to process a case...We are not whining, that's okay. But because of department requirements that we have to meet, it takes a lot more time to process a case...The [Cal-Learn] MOU is since 1995 and is totally outdated. Our job descriptions are also totally outdated and it needs to be updated to the current job functions.”

While overwhelming workloads compress the GSW work day, they also cause problems in communicating and coordinating with case managers. One-half of the case managers surveyed for this study agreed “somewhat”, and an additional 13.3 percent agreed “strongly”, that they sometimes have trouble contacting GSWs. The rest of those surveyed either disagreed “strongly” (10 percent), disagreed “somewhat” (20 percent), or had no opinion (6.7 percent). One case manager serving the Antelope Valley explicitly linked delays participants experience in obtaining supportive services to large GSW caseloads: “The GSWs have a caseload of 200 because people have left. It is very frustrating because you want things to move on.” Another case manager who works in the San Fernando Valley reiterated that each GSW receives an overwhelming number of daily requests, messages and notices, a portion of each, as a consequence, are inevitably lost or ignored:

“It makes the case manager waste time because you are calling [the GSWs], re-faxing, leaving messages to them. Teens have problems with transportation money; she borrows money from her mom and needs to pay her back. [The GSWs] have a very high caseload of 200 per GAIN worker. You lied to [the participants] basically because you tell them they will get their [transportation] check, and when they don't get the check [we] lose that relationship with them.”

When large workloads cause communication and coordination problems between GSWs and case managers, the customer service provided to teens can be compromised, and it is for this reason that excessive workloads, especially those of the GSWs, should be viewed as a program-level barrier participants face when they enter

Cal-Learn. One GSW said that she tries “to keep up with providing excellent customer services, but sometimes with a high caseload it is not impossible but difficult to achieve this goal.” Similarly, another GSW said the following: “My heart’s desire is that the caseload would be lower so we can really do good customer service and feel more comfortable with the services that we are providing, and have time to do the things that we want to do for our participants.”

## **Communication and Coordination Breakdowns**

Breakdowns in communication and coordination between the various interdependent parties involved in Cal-Learn—participants, DPSS, AFLP agencies, Resource and Referral agencies, and schools—deserve close attention. This section focuses on five levels of communication and coordination within the Cal-Learn program: (a) Between DPSS and participants; (b) between case managers and participants; (c) between participants and Resource and Referral agencies; (d) between case managers and GSWs; (e) between schools, case managers and DPSS. The analytical objective here is to show how breakdowns at each of these levels form barriers to participant progress in school.

### ***Between DPSS and Cal-Learn Participants***

A large majority of case managers feel that teens do not understand notices sent to them from DPSS. Close to 57 percent of those surveyed agreed “strongly”, and another 35 percent agreed “somewhat”, that Cal-Learn teens do not understand these notices. Only 3.3 percent disagreed “strongly”, 1.7 percent disagreed “somewhat”, and 3.3 percent had “no opinion”. In focus group interviews, case managers drew particular attention to the official Cal-Learn Orientation letter (CL1). This letter is generated from GEARS and sent from DPSS to program participants. A number of case managers noted that the presentation of the letter is uninviting and written in what could be described as overly formal and bureaucratic language. The letter, in other words, was not designed or written with its young recipients in mind, and teens have a difficult time understanding it when it arrives in the mail. One case manager working in the South Bay expressed a widely held opinion in linking the look of the letter to difficulties in getting teens to complete Orientation in a timely manner:

“I think what happens is that a lot of people receive these letters in the mail and they do not bother to read them. The letter about the Orientation is like a print out. It is all in one font. It looks ugly. It looks scary. The words are all together. I would not want to read it.”

Furthermore, Terri, a case manager serving Hollywood and Central Los Angeles, observed that even if the Orientation letter is read and understood, it lacks crucial information about child care benefits: “The initial letter of Orientation is misleading because they tell them child care is provided.”<sup>19</sup> More specifically, the Orientation letter fails to tell teens that they must have proof of registration in school before they can have their child care benefits paid. This omission creates a gap, especially for teens that are

not enrolled in school at the time they receive the Orientation letter, because the teens require child care services in order to enroll in school. As another case manager working in East Los Angeles put it, "...[I]t's like a 'catch-22' because when they send out the CL1 or CL2, they tell them they will get transportation and child care, but you can't get child care or transportation money in Cal-Learn unless you are enrolled in school." The Resource and Referral agencies will pay retroactive child care for up to 30 days, but the initial onus to find and arrange for child care is placed on the teen until s/he enrolls in school.

Problems with the official Orientation letter are particularly noteworthy because they can cause breakdowns in communication with the program's participants right from the start. A number of Cal-Learn case managers remarked upon a similar problem in talking about what they perceive as a lack of knowledge and awareness about Cal-Learn among some of DPSS' EWs. Molly, a case manager working in the San Fernando Valley, said the following: "We need more communication with DPSS and us. We are still encountering the EWs who have no clue who we are. They are supposed to be our sister agency." Another case manager working in the San Fernando Valley provided a similar observation:

"We have eligibility workers who don't know about Cal-Learn...So when we are trying to help our clients enroll in Cal-Learn, they don't know about it...They have a different capacity. We are dealing with a client who becomes pregnant and they are on the mother's case and [the EWs] have no clue about Cal-Learn."

An important detail to keep in mind is that Cal-Learn participants receive information from one of two different types of EWs: regular intake EWs, who handle aided adults and their children, and minor parent EWs, who handle pregnant and parenting teens, including minors with no parents receiving aid. A case manager serving East Los Angeles made the following observations: "I believe that the regular EW is unaware of the Cal-Learn program because there is such a huge turnover at DPSS. I think that is a reason they have not been trained on the Cal-Learn program." Another case manager serving the same area added to this: "All of our clients do not go through the minor [parent] EW, especially if they have a senior parent...We do not have a problem with the minor [parent] EWs. We can tell which client came through the [minor parent] EW."

Problems with the Cal-Learn Orientation letter and insufficiently knowledgeable EWs cause breakdowns in necessary communication between DPSS and participants. In both cases, the breakdown hinders program participation. Another case manager working in East Los Angeles offered the following information and recommendation:

"Recently, in the last month, we have been getting some EWs telling clients that they do not have to go to school for a year...I noticed that it happens when there is a new Eligibility Worker...These EWs do not tell [the clients] the program requirements, so when I meet them I get resistance. [The clients] say, 'oh well they told me that I don't have to be in school for a year.'...Each EW must be trained on Cal-Learn as they come in. That might ease some of the problems we are having with the operation of the Cal-Learn program."



## ***Between Case Managers and Participants***

One of the biggest challenges Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies face is finding the teens in their caseloads and then maintaining regular communication with them. Part of the difficulty stems from resistance on the part of some teens to additional sources of authority in their lives. One case manager working in the San Gabriel Valley said, “It is very difficult to get in touch [with participants]. I think some teens have resistance problems and know their way around certain procedures, and they may not want us involved in their lives.” Closely related to this, when case managers do home visits for Orientation and follow up meetings, the teens sometimes confuse them for representatives of other agencies, and they fear that the case managers are there to impose penalties or burdens. Penelope, a case manager serving East Los Angeles, said the following:

“We are constantly being confused with DCFS. They see your ID and we get resistance. The resistance is strong at the beginning. They have a misconception of who we are and they are afraid that we will take away their child or look in their refrigerator.”

As discussed in Chapter 3, difficulties in contacting and communicating with Cal-Learn teens also emerge due to homelessness or housing instability. Maxine, a case manager serving Hollywood, made the following observations:

“A lot of [the teens] use a DPSS address. They are homeless or whatever. That is one of our biggest battles at this time. There is no time limit for them to use the DPSS address, which makes our job that much more difficult because how are we going to go stand at the DPSS office to meet them? ‘Are you Jane Doe? Are you Jane Doe? Are you Jane Doe?’ We just don’t know. There is no way to get in contact with them. We get returned mail, and at this point I can’t tell you how many clients that we have that are using the DPSS address.”

The ability to communicate with Cal-Learn teens is also impaired by the capacity CalWORKs participants have to access their cash aid with debit cards. Jennifer, a case manager working in the Antelope Valley, made the following comment and recommendation:

“We had a problem with homelessness where the client gives the DPSS address. What [DPSS] can do for us is if they can freeze the case or suspend their cash until [the client] meet(s) with the GAIN worker, update their address, and then the funds get released right there. We did not have this problem [when the cash aid check was sent in the mail], but now they can go with a debit card to any cash place and pick up their money, so now we are having this problem.”

For Cal-Learn to be effective, case managers must be able to provide intensive assistance and support to the program’s teens. However, as Gina, a case manager in the San Gabriel Valley pointed out, “...if you can’t find the teen, there isn’t much you can do.” Breakdowns in communication between case managers and participants are therefore especially noteworthy barriers to program participation.

## ***Between Participants and Resource and Referral Agencies***

The outsourcing of child care management to Resource and Referral agencies introduces an additional bureaucratic organization into the Cal-Learn program process. Although Cal-Learn case managers are involved to varying degrees in obtaining child care for participants, the Resource and Referral agencies nevertheless free the case managers of a good portion of the task of arranging for child care services in each case. In turn, the case managers have more time to attend to other responsibilities. However, 36.7 percent of the case managers surveyed for this study agreed “strongly”, and another 33.3 percent agreed “somewhat”, that Cal-Learn teens sometimes have trouble arranging for child care with the Resource and Referral agencies. Only 3.3 percent disagreed “strongly”, and 5 percent disagreed “somewhat”. The balance (21.7 percent) had “no opinion”.

More specifically, one problem case managers pointed out in focus group interviews is that teens are frequently overwhelmed by the paperwork they are asked to complete when the child care packages arrive from the Resource and Referral agencies. Jackie, a case manager working in the South Bay, said the following in talking about the child care package: “There are so many forms that it is guaranteed that the client is going to fill out wrong. If it is filled out wrong, it’s incomplete [and] there is no approval. If they can make the [package] smaller or easier for our clients to understand, then that will speed up the process.” Several other case managers added that forms often move back and forth numerous times between the participants and the Resource and Referral agencies. One case manager in the San Fernando Valley, for example, noted the following:

“[The Resource and Referral agencies] mail out the forms to the client. It goes back and forth, so it is taking more time. ‘Don’t use white out’; ‘You forgot your name’. So it goes back and forth. Then the [Resource and Referral agencies] are on a time limit because they only pay back [child care] for 30 days. [But the forms] can go back and forth for more than 30 days.”

Tanya, another case manager working in the South Bay, also mentioned that Cal-Learn teens are faced with large amounts of complicated paperwork, but her remarks also suggest that having a second case manager for child care tends to confuse Cal-Learn teens. Furthermore, the confusion is exacerbated by a lack of coordination between the AFLP agencies and the Resource and Referral agencies:

“...I feel that the child care aspect is so foreign...[O]nce we send out the referral, our client gets a whole lot of paperwork, and they get another case manager...from the agency...That is just too much for a client...The case manager is supposed to help them get child care, but since my client cannot get hold of the case manager, she’s calling me, asking me questions. I don’t know anything about child care...It’s another agency that my client has to deal with...”

Another case manager, Barbara, who works in East Los Angeles, offered similar observations, and she emphasized that the Resource and Referral agencies are often inaccessible to teens when they have questions or problems:

“When I started, we used to do the [child care] application, and it seemed to me a good idea that it was being outsourced because it gives us more time to do more things for our clients, such as help them with DV issues...The child care paperwork takes up a lot of time. But what I am noticing is that I spend more time trying to get in touch with the child care worker for our client than if we fill out the application ourselves. For me, the process is not working that well. Sometimes I call the [Resource and Referral agency], and I get two different answers from two different child care workers. So I wonder how frustrating is that for a teen who already has problems talking to an adult.”

Each of these factors—the confusing paperwork required by the Resource and Referral agencies, inaccessible child care case managers, and a lack of coordination between the AFLP agencies and the Resource and Referral agencies—combine to create delays in providing Cal-Learn participants with the child care referrals they need in order to attend school. It should also be reemphasized that a child care referral requires proof of enrollment in school, and yet teens often need child care services provided before they can take the time to enroll. Given these obstacles, some teens stop making efforts to attend school, concluding that they will not be able to access the child care services to which they’ve been previously told they are eligible. Observations made by a Cal-Learn case manager in East Los Angeles capture how damaging these obstacles and delays can be: “I talk to my client and I try to reach the child care worker. My client gets frustrated and the child care provider says, ‘No I am not getting paid, I am not taking care of your baby.’ So all my hard work has gone down the drain. After I helped my client enroll in school, she drops out.”

### ***Between Case Managers and GSWs***

As Chapter 2 of this report attempts to convey, communication and coordination between case managers at the AFLP agencies and GSWs at DPSS is integral to the functionality of Cal-Learn. Case managers are charged with locating participants and ensuring that they enroll in school and make regular progress. These responsibilities, as well as the continual follow up work that must be completed for each participant, require considerable effort and dedication. However, the efforts case managers make go largely wasted unless GSWs are able to process requests for supportive services in a timely manner. By the same measure, GSWs cannot each process supportive services requests for roughly 200 participants unless the case managers are able to complete the necessary paperwork and provide the necessary information, accurately and without delay.

The focus group interviews conducted with case managers at the AFLP agencies and GSWs for this study revealed that the workers in each group are generally committed to the goals of Cal-Learn and derive considerable job satisfaction from helping teens to improve their lives. One Cal-Learn GSW, for example, said that, “...[T]he most rewarding part of our jobs is when we go to graduation ceremonies. It gives us a chance to see the [participant] graduating, to see the results, the challenges that they go through.” Another GSW said the following:

"[When] I do a presentation [on Cal-Learn] I get goose bumps. There are some of us, not all of us, who were offered lateral transfers to other programs, but we like it here. When you see [the teens] graduate [and you say] 'Joan Smith, I am your GAIN Worker', and it is so exciting. She graduated. That is something that helps her morale and self-esteem. I can't imagine having a child now...They're overwhelmed with adult responsibilities, so it is so important that the program works..."

Similarly, a case manager serving East Los Angeles expressed the view that, "No one told [these teens] they are worth anything except us. We have made a difference in a client's life and hopefully in that teen's child's life. We are changing lives, one at a time, but we are, we are." Likewise, a case manager working in Hollywood and central Los Angeles said the following:

"[The teens] come in with a lot of issues. It is so difficult. I assess their living condition and their mentality. I tell them there is a pot of gold at the end of the rainbow or at the end of the tunnel. I try to give them back what was taken away from them. I try to help them."

But in spite of their occupational/organizational interdependence and the similarity of their goals vis a vis the teens in their caseloads, one is struck by the high degree of contention that exists between the Cal-Learn GSWs and case managers. In the focus group interview with GSWs, it was not uncommon, for instance, to hear them express the conviction that case managers simply do not do their jobs. "One of the suggestions I wanted to make," one GSW said, "[is that] maybe the Orientation the case managers do with the participants would include better motivation for the teen to participate in the program. Because, I don't know, as far as I can see it is not working." Another GSW said the following: "I too agree with my colleague that Cal-Learn is an excellent program. However, it requires case management. There isn't that case management piece. [The teens] need to be pushed and encouraged. [When the teens say], 'okay I don't wanna go [to school]', [you cannot say], 'okay fine.'" Likewise, one case manager commenting on the GSWs expressed a common suspicion held on the AFLP side when she said that, "...for GAIN workers the well-being of the teens is not a priority. They just want to see the report card update." Another case manager said, "everything with DPSS is complicated...They are trying to make our jobs harder."

Anyone looking in at Cal-Learn from a more objective position outside the program will quickly conclude that neither the GSWs nor the case managers are incompetent or purposefully non-responsive. On the contrary, these two groups of workers, each in their own way, are unsung heroes, dedicated to the vital work they do, thankless though it may often be. Clearly, then, certain aspects of the way Cal-Learn is organized have inadvertently led to breakdowns in communication between GSWs and case managers and have blocked the ability of each to see their common purpose.

Misunderstandings between GSWs and case managers can potentially affect their capacity to work with each other. A lack of coordination between these two parties, moreover, impedes teens as they attempt to make progress in school. In looking to enhance Cal-Learn in the future, it will therefore be especially important for DPSS and the AFLP agencies to make a joint effort at improving the overall relationship between

GSWs and case managers. A positive first step in doing this is to look at the specific areas in the program process where communication and coordination between the two groups of workers tends to break down.

One problem case managers at the AFLP agencies pointed to on several occasions is the difficulty they have in making contact with GSWs and/or obtaining necessary information from GSWs either over the telephone or via fax. One case manager said that, "Contacting the GSW is challenging, leaving messages for them. Sometimes they call us back and say, 'I never got the paperwork', so we have to fax the paperwork again. Maybe they are overloaded with cases. It is just back and forth, back and forth." Another case manager, specifically citing problems related to participants who provide a DPSS mailing address, felt that GSWs, along with the Cal-Learn staff at DPSS more generally, could do a better job in these cases of finding the address where participants can be reached:

"In the case of the DPSS address, it means that the client has no place to live. There is a lack of communication between DPSS, the contracting agency...and [the] GAIN worker who is supposed to be the liaison to work these issues out. We do the leg work and we go to [the clients'] homes, to an empty household, empty land sometimes. We send the information to the GSW that their role is to work on these obstacles, but it is not happening. We don't get any feedback. We are using our own resources. The time goes by...We have to orient [the clients] in 30 days, and if not we have to explain why. There are a lot of phone calls with no clear answers, and a lot of paperwork generated because of that when we do not find [the clients]. There is no explanation as to why [DPSS does] not get [the clients'] updated addresses."

While case managers cite a frequent lack of effective communication on the part of GSWs, GSWs complain that the information they receive from case managers is often incomplete or incorrect. One GSW said the following:

"When I contact the case manager, sometimes they miss on the request for transportation the location of the school the teen attends and how many days they attend school. And sometimes if the forms are incomplete, they do not indicate, so we tell them, 'you better update the system, otherwise we cannot provide them [transportation assistance].' Sometimes the report card is sent for a bonus but we are missing the start date and we do not know from what month to what month. It is very difficult to do."

Several other GSWs made additional comments regarding the problem of incomplete report card schedules. One GSW said the following:

"Now, in terms of our interaction with the case managers, what is so difficult to call a school before you input the report card schedule? This is causing a major problem that goes back and forth...What is so difficult to call the school? Find out the program where the participant is in; is it a quarter basis or semester basis?"

Another GSW discussed problems case managers have with the sanctions process and connected his observations to issues surrounding training and staff turnover:

"[With] the case managers there is a constant turnover, and the new ones have no one to turn to. They are not adequately trained...This is a major problem for us for

noncompliance. We receive a recommendation to sanction. [The case manager] tells me [the teen] doesn't have a good cause, and yet [she hasn't] spoken to the teen...There is no CL3 appointment, which is the noncompliance appointment. I say, 'how are you asking me to sanction the teen when you didn't even talk to her?' There is no noncompliance appointment in the system. They don't know. I think that it is a lack of training on the part of the case managers. When they had a full crew which was knowledgeable at one time, it was great. They knew that they had to call the schools at the beginning of the year, and they would fax me [and say], 'this is how I am basing the report card schedule'...But those case managers leave and move on to different jobs, and the new ones are not receiving the same training."

Lapses in communication and problems in providing correct and complete information are likely related to issues discussed earlier in this chapter. For example, GSWs may sometimes have difficulty being responsive to case managers because their caseloads are simply too large to respond immediately to every faxed query or telephone message. As one GSW said, "Everything has a priority, and it is time sensitive with the bonuses. Everything is more demanding, and that is difficult with so many requests." At the same time, it is likely that problems case managers have in providing accurate and complete information to the GSWs are the result of their having to manage such a large volume of paperwork, especially considering that a sizable portion of their work time is spent away from their offices, trying to locate hard-to-find teens. It should also be pointed out that inaccurate or incomplete report card schedules are undoubtedly bound up with coordination issues between case managers and schools, which will be discussed in more detail below.

DPSS' two- and three-tier approval procedures for supportive services and bonuses add to the perception case managers have about the lack of GSW responsiveness. In the case manager survey, 70 percent of the respondents agreed "strongly", and another 21.7 percent agreed "somewhat", that the approval time for supportive services should be streamlined to eliminate long delays. In this respect, one case manager participating in a focus group session made the following remarks:

"It is a constant questioning of the case manager and what we are trying to do when we are trying to help our clients; that is our biggest problem with the GAIN workers. [The GSWs] say, 'Oh, I have to call my supervisor.' Can't you make a decision? We have clients that have been waiting for supportive services for three months. [The GSWs] say, 'Oh, sanction her.' Well, you did not do the supportive services [and] I don't feel comfortable with that. You are the one that did not send her the supportive services and the money for her school supplies."

The GSWs agreed that approval procedures for supportive services can cause delays. This is especially the case when approval must come from the GAIN Deputy handling Cal-Learn, whose office is in Pomona and not in the El Monte GAIN office where the Cal-Learn GSWs are housed.

Later in this chapter, issues surrounding rigid application of program rules and regulations will be discussed. One related problem that should be addressed here, however, is the effectiveness with which changes in rules and regulations are communicated between DPSS/GSWs and AFLP agencies/case managers. More than

four-fifths of respondents to the case manager survey either agreed “somewhat” (45.8 percent), or agreed “strongly” (35.6 percent), that changes in Cal-Learn policy and program rules are sometimes not communicated in a timely manner. This problem was inadvertently displayed in conflicting explanations of the requirements participants must meet in order to access transportation assistance. While a number of participants in the case manager focus groups said that this assistance requires school enrollment verification, participants in the GSW focus group said that this verification is no longer necessary in order for participants to access transportation services. More generally, one case manager observed that, “By the time [the AFLP agency] hears that a change has happened, it has probably been going on for about a year and a half.” Related to this, another case manager suggested that it would be helpful if the program manual was updated: “We had a meeting two years ago and it was told to us that they are re-writing the manual, and that it will be more specific, but it hasn’t happened. We have a 10-year-old manual, so we rely on the memos and we go to meetings.”

However, one GSW expressed the opinion that problems in communicating rule changes are a result of the flow of information *within* the AFLP agencies as opposed to *between* DPSS and the AFLP agencies:

“The changes that do occur, they are at the monthly meetings that our Deputies attend. There are program coordinators and program directors representing the contractors [in attendance]. The information is disseminated to them in those meetings. Now, whether it gets to the [case managers], that’s a whole other story...When [case managers] ask us, ‘why do they need that?’, [we say] ‘didn’t your program director tell you?’ That is two levels higher than [the case managers]—not their supervisors, it is the program director. [We ask], ‘didn’t he or she tell you?’, and [the case managers] say ‘no.’”

### ***Between Schools, Case Managers and DPSS***

Case managers pointed to several difficulties they encounter in working with various school systems in the County of Los Angeles. Case managers frequently find themselves responsible for providing report card schedules to the GSWs before the schools themselves have released these schedules. Gina, a case manager serving the San Gabriel Valley, made the following observation: “...[F]or the report card schedule, the end of school is June, then the year-end report card we get a lot of them in, but before we submit that we have to submit the next report card date, and the schools don’t have their schedule at that time.” There is, therefore, an apparent discrepancy between the program procedures DPSS expects case managers to follow and the timing of the release of school schedules. Case managers, in turn, are either unable to complete the report card schedule by the deadline or they attempt to make guesses as to what the correct dates will be, thinking that they can correct the schedules they submit at a later time. Either way, however, confusion can result, in which case participants experience delays in receiving services and bonus payments. Maria, a case manager serving Hollywood and central Los Angeles, said the following:

“[I]f the schedule is not in place, we cannot update the report card. The case workers call: ‘...Why isn’t it updated in GEARS?’ I cannot make a bonus recommendation because the schedule is not in place...Cal-Learn was created without the school districts

in mind, and not realizing how difficult it will be to have these reporting periods. We cannot enter [the report card update] as we want. Each AFLP deals with a different school district...Each school district has a different report card schedule, depending on what track they are on.”

In this context, it should be noted that several GSWs expressed frustration with how often report card schedules are either incomplete or incorrect. Jill, a GSW, offered the following comment: “My challenge is with the case managers and the report card period. We have to go back and forth to correct it because it is not matching the school schedule. We cannot sanction unless it is in the system.” Tony, another GSW, added this:

“...[T]he case manager sent the recommendation with the due date, and [it] needs to correspond to the dates in GEARS, and in many cases it doesn’t correspond...If the information that we receive is complete and accurate that will reduce the time we consume on cross referencing and we can dedicate time to outreach...”

While some GSWs felt that the report card schedule discrepancies reflected carelessness on the part of case managers, it seems more plausible that these problems usually result from a mismatch between the deadlines for providing the schedules to DPSS and the release of these schedules from the schools.

Another problem case managers noted is that schools often have little or no knowledge of Cal-Learn and, for this reason, are hesitant to provide records about students enrolled in the program. An overwhelming majority (91.5 percent) of respondents to the case manager survey agreed “strongly” that school districts need to become more familiar with Cal-Learn and its requirements. Moreover, 78.3 percent of the respondents either agreed “strongly” (40 percent) or agreed “somewhat” (38.3 percent), versus only 10 percent who either disagreed “strongly” (3.3 percent) or disagreed “somewhat” (6.7 percent), that they sometimes have difficulties getting the school district(s) to release the report cards of Cal-Learn teens in their caseloads. Gina, a case manager working in the San Gabriel Valley, offered elaborative remarks in a focus group session:

“Another challenge that I have is the schools not understanding the program and not knowing the liability questions. We have to submit the school verification. We are on a time limit to submit it to [the Resource and Referral agency], or to the GSWs for transportation or for books, or supplies, or whatever...[I]f [the schools] receive [the enrollment verification form], I don’t get it back for two weeks. So they don’t see the importance of it, to send it back to me.”

Another case manager working in Hollywood and central Los Angeles offered the following observation and recommendation:

“It would be wonderful if the County had a designated liaison with the school system. Getting through the schools is one of the biggest barriers. They are clueless about Cal-Learn. [A liaison] between the County and the school system will be very beneficial.”



A third issue noted by both case managers and GSWs is that regulations regarding official recognition and accreditation of schools are unclear, and some participants attend non-accredited schools or diploma programs. This is less a barrier to program participation per se than a factor that can deprive participants of an education that meets legitimate standards and that leads to a generally recognized diploma. Petra, a case manager working in the South Bay and South Los Angeles, said the following:

“Another thing is the accreditation issue...I cannot believe they have schools that are not even accredited. Like I have a client, and she is going to a mainstream high school. She gets pregnant. So she wants to go to a home study, or she doesn't want to but her home school wants her to do a home study. However, the home study program is not accredited. They refer students to non accredited [programs]. These people who run these schools...are handing out diplomas to the kids that do not mean anything. [The students] are doing all this work for nothing.”

Helen, a GSW, also expressed concern in this area:

“Some of the schools that the teens are going to are fly-by-night schools. They can go to a room in an office in a building, pay \$250, and write a story about their life, and get a High School Diploma...[W]ith additional scrutiny, we found out that these schools are not recognized by the Department of Education...They don't list these schools...”

Kelly, another GSW, added the following comments:

“[T]he State in the regulation is not clear on which schools are acceptable and what schools are not. They just have to be recognized. Well, everybody understands this differently...[S]ome of them are private schools that are not listed on the California Board of Education listing of schools, but we don't know if they are acceptable or not acceptable, are they recognized or not recognized. It is a challenge for us. Some of [the non-accredited schools say,] 'based on your life experience earn your GED...So I don't know what the criteria [is] for the schools to be recognized by whom. What are the requirements for this school to be a good school or not...There is nothing in writing which specifically gives a guide [as to] how we navigate around all the schools...”<sup>20</sup>

## **Delays and Gaps in the Availability of Supportive Services, and Problems in the Distribution of Bonuses**

This chapter has already drawn some attention to service delivery issues in connection with other barriers. However, since the availability of services is essential to the capacity Cal-Learn teens have to attend school, it is important to draw on further remarks made in focus group interviews regarding delays in service delivery and availability. In this context, it will also be useful to highlight some of the comments case managers made regarding the distribution of bonuses.

As discussed earlier, case managers at some of the AFLP agencies mentioned that receipt of some supportive services requires enrollment verification, and yet participants often cannot enroll until they have access to these services, which is especially problematic if they are unable, for example, to make temporary child care arrangements. More than three-fifths of respondents to the case manager survey “strongly” agreed, and an additional 25 percent agreed “somewhat,” that Cal-Learn

teens in their caseloads sometimes have trouble enrolling in school because they aren't eligible for child care and transportation assistance until after they are enrolled. One case manager speaking in a focus group session said that she herself has looked after young children while their parents enroll in school: "Recently I have provided child care and I sit at the school or even transport clients when they have to complete their school assessment...Some of them do not have anyone, no family or boyfriend. They have no one..."

Of course, case managers cannot be expected, as a rule, to personally fill in child care gaps for participants. But participants face further delays and gaps even if they are able to fill initial gaps. More than three quarters of the respondents to the case manager survey answered "yes" when asked if they ever encounter barriers in linking Cal-Learn teens with transportation and/or child care. Close to 57 percent of survey respondents either agreed "strongly" (13.3 percent) or agreed "somewhat" (43.3 percent), versus almost 27 percent who either disagreed "strongly" or disagreed "somewhat", that Cal-Learn teens are sometimes sanctioned for not attending school because of delays in getting transportation. At the same time, more than four-fifths (85 percent) of the survey respondents either agreed "strongly" (41.7 percent) or agreed "somewhat" (43.3 percent) that Cal-Learn teens often have trouble attending school because their child care needs are not met. One case manager working in Hollywood said the following in a focus group interview: "It takes 30 days for child care to kick in. Who is going to care for their child before they can go to school? In that month they already missed 20 days of school." Additionally, when survey respondents were asked what proportion of their Cal-Learn caseloads have been sanctioned for not attending school because of delays in getting child care, 14 percent said none, 36.8 percent said less than one-quarter, 29.8 percent said between one-quarter and one-half, and 14 percent said between 51 and 75 percent.

As discussed previously in this chapter, delays in receiving transportation assistance are, at least in part, the result of DPSS' multi-tiered approval system for transportation. A case manager working in the San Gabriel Valley pointed out another contributing factor relevant to both transportation *and* child care:

"One of the issues that we faced for a while is that some of the schools required that the client enroll for two weeks before the school provided us with enrollment verification. So during these two weeks they do not get child care and transportation. During that time, our clients can have cold feet again [and] change their mind."<sup>21</sup>

Some case managers feel that the timing of the availability of supportive services would improve if, as one worker in Hollywood put it, DPSS gave the case managers "the authority to handle transportation in house. The same for child care. There is a lot of waiting time and the deadlines are not flexible." Another case manager working in Hollywood made a similar observation:

"I think Cal-Learn will work better if child care and transportation needs are met before enrolling in school, at least a month before. This can make or break the case, the teens feel helpless. We are having a lot of trouble the social workers here because child care has been denied for x, y ,and z reasons. They have to be enrolled in school first."

It should be emphasized here that case managers were by no means unanimous in the view that they should be given more responsibility with respect to making arrangements for transportation and child care. Opinions given in focus group interviews appeared to be divided between those who thought this responsibility would be a positive change and those who felt it would add an additional burden to an already large workload. Regardless of the recommended solutions, however, gaps and delays in the availability of supportive services are barriers to program participation that were mentioned repeatedly by case managers in focus group interviews.

A related issue worthy of brief discussion is the manner in which bonuses are distributed to participants who turn in report cards indicating satisfactory progress in school—i.e. a 2.0 grade point average or better for the given reporting period.

A number of case managers suggested that, in cases where Cal-Learn teens live with their parents (nested cases), the \$100 bonuses should be sent directly to the teens as opposed to being mailed to the CalWORKs payee in the household.<sup>22</sup> Jennifer, a case manager serving the Antelope Valley, said the following:

“Another challenge when clients are going to school and they are under age, the bonus check is mailed out to their parent as a separate check, the parent does not give them their money and the teen says, ‘I did not get the money.’ [The parents] are low income, they use it to buy food or whatever. Then the teen says, ‘This is my money, I am the one who went to school.’”

Another case manager in the same focus group interview added this: “It is written on the CL2 it is the teen bonus. But the County requirement is that the bonus goes to the household, not the teen...So the teen will say, ‘Why should I go to school?’ if they are not getting the incentive money.” A case manager working the San Gabriel Valley expressed a similar view: “A long gripe that I have is regarding the bonus. If [the teens] are on the mom’s case, I think that the check is in the mom’s name. So the client does not see the bonus or receive the benefits of going to school, or getting good grades, or anything like that.”

Results from the case manager survey were in keeping with these comments. More than two-thirds (68.3 percent) of the respondents agreed “strongly”, and an additional 26.7 percent agreed “somewhat”, that Cal-Learn teens would be more motivated to get good grades and complete high school if the \$100 bonuses were paid directly to them.

### **The Rigidity of Program Rules and Procedures, and the Emphasis Given to Documentation and Performance Measurement**

Cal-Learn is governed by a systematic set of rules and procedures. Case managers and GSWs must officially record and document their adherence to these rules and procedures, as well as the adherence of the program’s participants. Moreover, because Cal-Learn is funded with public monies, various target goals have been set for the

program and codified in the contracts DPSS enters into with the AFLP agencies. DPSS, in turn, monitors the extent to which these goals are achieved, thereby providing an ongoing public account of the Cal-Learn program's performance.

In these respects, Cal-Learn is no different than any other large-scale public social service program. Successful administration of such programs depends on a bureaucratic division of labor organized around rules, procedures, documentation and accountability. But while bureaucracy is, in the case of the Cal-Learn program, intended to be a means for helping teens graduate by efficiently providing them with services and case management, a number of case managers, as well as AFLP program directors, feel that the program is run in a way that overemphasizes rigidly defined procedures, documentation and performance measurement. These formal elements of bureaucratic administration take on a life of their own and detract from the Cal-Learn program's potential to achieve the substantive goals for which it was designed.

A case manager working in East Los Angeles, Penelope, expressed frustration with what she perceives as a lack of flexibility in Cal-Learn procedures:

"I have learned that it is the DPSS way or no way. You have to dot every I and cross every T. For example, the school verification form...It is sent back for something simple and minor. It is time consuming when a call could have prevented that."

Mary, a case manager serving the San Gabriel Valley, pointed to similar problems:

"I've had to fax a request for transportation two or three times because the school address wasn't on there, or it wasn't the correct date, or the teacher didn't sign the line for the report card but they signed next to all the grades. So sometimes it can lengthen the process, and in between being in the field and having to get back to the GAIN worker it can drag out."

Another case manager working in the San Fernando Valley noted that additional problems can be created when participants from very different types of communities are all subjected to the same inflexible application of program rules and procedures:

"The idea of one shirt fits all has to go...The regulations in the manual do not fit us, and it does not work in our area... [DPSS does not] see that [participants] may live in areas where there are no schools, they have no family support...[DPSS does not] see that there are a lot of gaps. Ancillary services are written in a way that the actual letter that goes to the client is not clear that they have to be enrolled in school to receive these services. It just says they are now assigned to Cal-Learn and they can receive these services, but it does not say that they need to be enrolled in school...We go to a house, there is no car, and they don't have any transportation. How can I give you proof of enrollment without having the transportation assistance? You need to give them a voucher or token to make this happen. So there is a gap."

Procedural rigidity within Cal-Learn spills over into communication and coordination between the AFLP agencies and DPSS. Program directors from the AFLP agencies expressed frustration, for example, with DPSS' requirement that communication

between the two organizations occur laterally and along tightly defined chains of command. One program director said the following:

“...[I]t used to be that a data entry person could call a DPSS supervisor. Now this has changed, and the communication has to be lateral, meaning a case manager to a GSW, a Cal-Learn Supervisor to a GSS, and the Director to the Deputies or Director of the program. It is tiered communication, which slows things down...There is a lot of triangulation, instead of direct communication.”

Another AFLP program director added to this:

“In order to resolve a situation, a case manager and a supervisor come to me to explain the situation. This means that the AFLP Director has to spend 15 minutes listening to the details of the case, so she can gain a good understanding that she can adequately communicate to the person at her level at DPSS...At DPSS, they go back down the chain between the GSW and Director and get their part of the story. This goes on, back and forth, literally for weeks, trying to resolve a situation.”

Some case managers feel that the strict insistence on this type of lateral, hierarchically defined communication slows the flow of information with respect to eligibility for supportive services. More fundamentally, the chains of command to which the AFLP agencies must adhere in communicating with DPSS delay the approval of services for participants and can potentially be a barrier to school attendance. A case manager working in the Antelope Valley made the following remarks:

“It is a constant questioning of the case manager and what we are trying to do when we are trying to help our clients. That is our biggest problem with the GAIN workers. [The GSWs say], ‘Oh, I have to call my supervisor.’ Can’t you make a decision? We have clients that have been waiting for supportive services for three months.”

Focus group interviews with Cal-Learn GSWs revealed that some case managers have attempted to circumvent the chains of command in an effort to win services approval more quickly for the participants in their caseloads. The comments quoted below from one GSW indicate that the GSWs do not appreciate this kind of break from lateral communication. However, the remarks also suggest that the defined chains of command sometimes do not provide the case managers and their participants with needed service approvals in a timely manner:

“...[I]n the last six months, many of the contractors have bypassed...our supervisors, our Deputy and our director at this region and called Welfare-to-Work headquarters. When they call we get the e-mail. It trickles down to us, and it [asks] why aren’t we taking action on this case? Well, because it says so on the requirements. And then the fight goes up. Now so many of these agencies are calling headquarters and it is acceptable. It is acceptable because they realize that they are getting things done, and headquarters [is] not saying, ‘you can’t do that, you must go to the supervisor first.’ If they go to the GSW we say no. We are denying their request. We say it has to go to the supervisor. But they skip three people and go to Welfare-to-Work [headquarters]. That has hurt our organization right now because it is acceptable behavior for them to bypass us altogether and go to headquarters...”

As has already been discussed, the large amount of paperwork case managers must continually complete is an issue related to larger questions surrounding workload burden. However, paperwork is also worth mentioning in the present context insofar as AFLP program directors, as well as a considerable number of case managers, feel that Cal-Learn is currently run in a way that overemphasizes documentation to the detriment of the real needs of the program's participants. Close to 57 percent of respondents to the case manager survey agreed "strongly", and another 38.3 percent agreed "somewhat", that Cal-Learn paperwork takes too much time, is needlessly repetitive and does not allow them enough time to provide proper case management to the teens in their caseloads. Margaret, a case manager serving the South Bay, described her work routine as follows during a focus group session:

"Every conversation that you have on the phone has to be documented on the case. When you do the intake at Orientation, there's tons of paperwork that the client has to sign, and you have to sign...I compare this job with the previous job. My prior job we had intensive case management. I was always with my clients. Here we are in the office in the morning, [and] I feel that a lot of time I am doing a lot of paperwork."

Similarly, a case manager working in Hollywood and Central Los Angeles said the following: "I love my job. It's just that Cal-Learn is so much paperwork that it is difficult to reach out and get to what they really need." When another case manager working in the same region was asked if she had any recommendations for how Cal-Learn might be improved, the remarks she made pointed in the same general direction:

"The only thing I can say is maybe less paperwork, so we can have more intensive case management, more one-on-one time with our clients, versus just sitting there with them filling out paperwork. I mean, the questions are repetitive from month to month basically, or every six months. Things have not changed, and you can sit there and talk to your client about goals, things they want to achieve versus paperwork."

The importance placed on documentation within Cal-Learn is, at least in part, the result of DPSS' determination to prevent fraud. "Concern about fraud," one AFLP program director noted, "is a barrier for AFLPs." While fraud related concerns are legitimate, AFLP program directors noted that these concerns can become counterproductive if attempts to stop fraud create a culture of suspicion which overshadows the program's efforts to help teens in need of support. In this respect, remarks offered by another AFLP program director are important to consider:

"...[T]here is a lack of trust of the information that we are providing. In the new procedure, the case manager goes to the school and sees the teen in the school, but their word is not enough...[GSWs] think that [the teens] are getting something that they are not entitled to. [If] the AFLP case managers get the GSW on the phone, the GSWs say that, 'I don't believe that this client is in school, or in the hospital.'"

Another AFLP program director added the following:

"Here in L.A. County we are getting second guessing. There isn't that kind of respect for our expertise, and trust. [DPSS is] contracting with us. We got audited. They did not find anything. Leave us to do our job...I think it is part of the DPSS culture, that if you are

their contractor you become one of their employees...They communicate with you like they are communicating internally. The whole thing is [based] on suspicion."

Along with the importance given to documentation, a number of case managers also feel that the administration of Cal-Learn overemphasizes contractual performance measurement. These case managers feel constant pressure to "meet their numbers"—i.e. consult personally with a certain number of participants and/or log a certain number of hours with participants each month, meet orientation targets, enrollment targets, report card targets, graduation targets, etc. As is the case with excessive documentation, moreover, the accent on *quantitative* measurement tends to compromise the *quality* of the attention case managers are able to give to participants, and this diminished quality sometimes becomes a barrier to the capacity the teens have to attend school regularly. Jennifer, a case manager serving the Antelope Valley, offered the following observations:

"...Everything is based on numbers. You have to see an x amount of clients per month, so we lose the quality of building the relationship with the client, because we are concentrating on the quantity...We may have seen a client several times in one month, [but] you can only count that person as one client. If that person has some issues and I was seeing her more times, that will affect my numbers."

A case manager working in the San Gabriel Valley also commented on 'meeting numbers' and spoke of how emphasis on performance measurement creates additional stress:

"Last year we were given monthly logs of how many successful Orientations that we had, how many of our clients are enrolled in school, how many graduated, and how many report cards that you have received. I guess that is in our contract. We have to meet certain percentage. It is very stressful for us trying to meet these criteria, because our clients have so many issues, or they are resistant to being in school, and we have to meet that percentage so that we get paid for our services. It is very stressful. We want the best for our clients. We want them to go back to school. But a certain situation came up and they cannot turn in the report card, yet we are held accountable because of contract purposes for a certain percentage."

The same case manager added that, "The program has changed in the last couple of years. We were more flexible. It seems that now it's about the numbers. So it prevents us from providing quality service to our clients. We want to work with the clients, we don't want [to be held to] the paper pushers' numbers."

It should also be noted that over-attention to narrow quantitative performance measures can mask the Cal-Learn program's substantive accomplishments, particularly if these accomplishments are not easily quantified or do not fit neatly into the existing performance categories. One case manager working in East Los Angeles made this point very eloquently:

"Maybe [the program] did not meet the graduation goals that the County set. [But] they were not there to see the teen who was physically abused then now has children with healthy relationships because they have been to parenting classes, or the teen who was exposed to DV [domestic violence] and is now living on their own and is now just going

back to school. Sometimes it is disheartening to feel like Cal-Learn is not successful, because that is all people are looking at. But there are things that we do here that are equally as important as the graduation from high school. To get a teen out of poverty is equally as important as the graduation. If I can get my client to move out of an unsafe environment, I am more than happy. I wish it was around when I was in High School. I wonder where some of my friends would have been today.”

## **Summarizing Program-Level Barriers**

The Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies and the Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS are committed to helping young people struggling with difficult combinations of economic disadvantage, early parenthood, and other person-level barriers. That Cal-Learn has been able to generate positive outcomes for a significant portion of its participants in spite of these often debilitating barriers is a testament to the importance of the program, as well as to the dedication and seriousness with which the program’s case managers and GSWs approach their work.

At the same time, there is undoubtedly room to improve the functionality of Cal-Learn in the future. A key question policymakers must address in this respect is how to harness the dedication and commitment of case managers and GSWs in a way that will enable them to work more effectively, not only with each other, but also with the Eligibility Workers, GSSs and deputies at DPSS, the child care case managers at the Resource and Referral agencies, the supervisors and directors at the AFLP agencies, and, of course, the program’s participants. This chapter has attempted to take the first step in addressing this issue by identifying the main areas where organizational and administrative problems have made it difficult for Cal-Learn staff to do their jobs and impeded the ability Cal-Learn teens have to make progress in school.

Case managers and GSWs both struggle with workload issues. Case managers expressed a variety of opinions when asked whether their overall workloads are overwhelming, but their answers to both survey and focus group questions were fairly unified in the opinion that large volumes of paperwork place limits on what they are able to do for Cal-Learn participants. Furthermore, the consensus among GSWs and case managers alike is that GSWs are overburdened by the size of their caseloads. The downsizing of the number of GSWs working on Cal-Learn since 2000, and the growth in the number of cases handled by each GSW, has made it more difficult for case managers to contact GSWs and led to frequent delays in the approval and delivery of supportive services.

Breakdowns in communication and coordination between the various parties involved in Cal-Learn were discussed further in focus group interviews. This chapter has focused on a number of levels of communication and coordination, the most noteworthy problem areas being communication between DPSS and Cal-Learn participants, communication between participants and the Resource and Referral agencies, and communication and coordination between case managers and GSWs.



More than 9 out of 10 case managers surveyed agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn teens often do not understand the notices DPSS sends them. Focus group interviews with case managers pointed specifically to the Orientation letter and its lack of clarity with regard to the conditions that must be met in order for participants to avail themselves of supportive services. Moreover, case managers noted that a significant portion of DPSS’ EWs, particularly those that are not minor parent EWs, have insufficient knowledge about Cal-Learn and frequently provide participants with information that is incomplete and/or incorrect.

Survey results and focus group interviews also suggest that once participants complete the Cal-Learn Orientation, many of them have difficulties in their dealings with the Resource and Referral agencies. More than four-fifths of the case managers surveyed agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn teens often have trouble attending school because their child care needs are not met. Remarks made in focus groups suggested that teens are confused by the paperwork they must complete when the child care packages arrive from the agencies, and forms often flow back and forth numerous times between participants and the agencies before a child care referral is finally provided. At the same time, the frequent inaccessibility of child care case managers at the Resource and Referral agencies further contributes to delays and can be disheartening to the participants.

Problems affecting coordination and communication between case managers and GSWs also frequently slow the progress participants are able to make in school. Comments offered in focus groups indicated that there is a considerable degree of contention between the two groups of workers. This strongly suggests that parts of the programmatic organization and administration of Cal-Learn have inadvertently prevented case managers and GSWs from communicating effectively with each other and from understanding that they are working towards common goals. More specifically, while case managers complain of the inaccessibility of GSWs, which itself is likely at least partially the result of large GSW caseloads, GSWs counter with the charge that much of the information and paperwork they receive from the case managers is incorrect and/or incomplete, which is likely partially an effect of the large volumes of paperwork case managers must complete. At the same time, case managers and GSWs both agreed that DPSS’ two and three-tier approval system slows the responsiveness of GSWs to case manager queries and, more fundamentally, slows the delivery of supportive services to Cal-Learn participants.

Case managers also pointed to other factors affecting the accessibility and availability of supportive services to Cal-Learn participants. The most frequently cited problem was that the Resource and Referral agencies cannot provide child care referrals until participants provide proof of their enrollment in school. This creates a potential gap because the ability participants have to enroll in school is frequently dependent on the availability of child care. Therefore, while the Resource and Referral agencies will pay back child care for up to 30 days, the initial responsibility for finding and arranging for child care falls on the teens and/or their families.

A final set of barriers discussed in this chapter is connected to what case managers and AFLP program directors see as a lack of flexibility in the application of Cal-Learn rules and procedures, as well as a related overemphasis on documentation and performance measurement. Focus group interviews suggested that the rigid application of rules and insistence on exact conformity with procedures often lead to needless back and forth exchanges of paperwork between case managers and GSWs. At the same time, this inflexibility forces personnel at the AFLP agencies to limit their contact with DPSS to lateral communication, and questions and problems are dealt with along a hierarchical chain of command that is often inefficient and can create further delays in the availability of supportive services for teens that would otherwise be able to attend school. In this context it is important to reemphasize that more than 9 out of 10 case managers agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that the approval time for supportive services should be streamlined to avoid delays. In addition, personnel at the AFLP agencies suggested that the administrative importance given to documentation and performance measurement places limits on the more substantive ways in which case managers might be able to assist and support the Cal-Learn teens with whom they work. One AFLP program director expressed this complex of problems with particular clarity when she said that, “[t]he program is not about paper, it is about people and meeting their needs...[But] it gets lost in the depersonalization...What gets put in the central position is the rules and regulations, and not that these people are living their life.”

## **Chapter 5**

### **Conclusion**

#### **Cal-Learn and Welfare Reform**

The importance of Cal-Learn is best understood when the program is seen in the larger context of welfare reform. At both the state and federal levels, the Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) welfare reform program seeks to promote self-sufficiency among economically disadvantaged families. While TANF has given the states considerable autonomy and latitude in shaping and implementing their own Welfare-to-Work programs, the federal mandate unifying these state-level programs is to encourage labor market engagement as a favorable alternative to welfare assistance. The central strategy in pursuing the goals of welfare reform is to focus on adults and to make cash assistance contingent on participation in Welfare-to-Work activities. In the process, welfare has been transformed into a temporary step for needy families on the way to a life of economic independence.

However, the promotion of self-sufficiency simultaneously requires an investment in disadvantaged children and adolescents. These young people represent future heads of household in families that, all else being equal, have a relatively high probability of welfare dependence. Far-sighted policymakers and stakeholders must therefore continually grapple with the potential measures that can be taken to help stop the passage of welfare dependency from one generation to the next. The issue becomes especially critical in considering adolescents, such as pregnant and parenting teens, who have multiple barriers standing in the way of their potential to become self-sufficient adults. A fairly wide array of research literature has shown that teen pregnancy considerably increases the likelihood of subsequent welfare participation.<sup>23</sup>

Although it is only a first step, the completion of a basic education undoubtedly increases the likelihood that pregnant and parenting teens will become self-sufficient adults. The Cal-Learn program is designed to provide the support and encouragement these teens need to earn a high school diploma and is therefore consistent with the stated goals of welfare reform. While this report has placed a good deal of focus on administrative and organizational (program-level) problems within Cal-Learn in the County of Los Angeles, the program itself is vital to the long-term success of welfare reform in the County, and the effort and commitment of the men and women who work with the program on a daily basis is to be commended. This report in no way questions the importance of Cal-Learn but rather seeks to provide information that can assist policymakers in improving the operation of the program.

## Key Findings and Policy Recommendations

This section summarizes the key findings offered in this report. Policy recommendations are provided, both on the basis of the report's findings and from suggestions made by AFLP Cal-Learn case managers, GSWs and AFLP program directors. It is important to reemphasize that the main sources of information for this report are focus group interviews and a survey that is largely based on the opinions of case managers. The findings and recommendations that follow, therefore, should not be interpreted as the "truth" in an absolute sense, but instead represent the perspectives of people with first-hand daily experience working with the Cal-Learn program.

- Housing instability, including homelessness, is a barrier to program participation for a significant proportion of Cal-Learn teens. While the majority of these teens are not homeless, more than 75 percent of the case managers surveyed for this report said they have homeless teens in their caseloads. In focus group interviews, moreover, both case managers and GSWs said that they frequently encounter teens that lack stable places to live. Case managers in particular noted that teens struggling with housing instability often don't receive official Cal-Learn notices. This instability also makes teens hard to find for in-person meetings.

**Recommendation:** In focus group interviews, Cal-Learn case managers working at some of the AFLP agencies described efforts they make to find shelter for teens facing housing instability, including homelessness. The AFLP agencies and DPSS should jointly consider implementing additional program measures designed to reduce housing instability for Cal-Learn teens.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should consider requiring Cal-Learn teens to provide a real residential address in their official program records, even if the address is not the permanent place where they live. Along with this, DPSS might either disallow Cal-Learn teens from giving a DPSS office as their mailing address or place a limit on the length of time Cal-Learn teens are allowed to use a DPSS mailing address in their official program records.

While this latter recommendation would not have a direct impact on housing instability, its implementation might facilitate communication with itinerant Cal-Learn participants. Even if participants do not live at the real residential addresses they would provide for their records, there is a chance that the residents living at these addresses might know or be related to the participants and could give the teens the official Cal-Learn notices arriving in the mail. These residents might also be able to point case managers in the proper direction for finding the Cal-Learn teens. On the other hand, when the program participants give a DPSS office as their mailing address, it is much less likely that they will receive the notices and/or be physically located by their case managers.

- Case managers feel that considerable proportions of the Cal-Learn participants in their caseloads are not academically prepared for high school. Close to half (46.7 percent) of the case managers surveyed for this report indicated that between one-quarter and one-half of the teens in their caseloads are not academically prepared, and close to another third (31.7 percent) indicated that between 51 and 75 percent of their caseloads are not academically prepared.
- A number of case managers in focus group interviews observed that Cal-Learn participants often come from family situations where the pursuit of education has never been valued, and little if any family encouragement is given to the teens to attend school. Moreover, case managers sometimes face situations in which program requirements, such as school attendance, and program objectives, such as preventing repeated pregnancies, clash with the values and priorities held by the families of Cal-Learn participants. In case manager survey responses, more than one-third (36 percent) of the respondents said that between one-quarter and one-half of their Cal-Learn caseloads consist of teens living in families that are not supportive of the program's goals regarding family planning. While 41.4 percent of the respondents put the proportion living in such families at less than 25 percent, 12 percent said they had no such teens in their caseload.
- Responses given to the case manager survey suggest that a significant proportion of Cal-Learn teens face problems related to mental health issues. Just under one-quarter (23.7 percent) of the survey respondents placed the proportion in need of mental health services in their caseloads at between 25 and 50 percent. While 47.5 percent of the respondents said less than one-quarter of their caseloads needed such services, only 8.5 percent said no participants in their caseloads required such services.
- Close to 17 percent of the case managers responding to our survey said their caseloads consisted of no participants in need of substance abuse services; 64.4 percent placed the proportion at less than one-quarter of their caseloads; 12 percent placed the proportion at between one quarter and one half of their caseloads.
- One quarter of the case manager survey respondents said their caseloads consisted of no participants in need of domestic violence services; close to 47 percent said less than one-quarter of their caseloads needed domestic violence services; 20 percent said between one-quarter and one-half of their caseloads needed these services.
- Most case managers responding to our survey said they do not have problems linking teens with specialized supportive services for mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence problems. Less than 14 percent said they have problems accessing mental health services for teens in their caseloads; only roughly 5 percent said they have difficulties accessing substance abuse services

for teens in their caseloads; roughly 10 percent said they have problems accessing domestic violence services for teens in their caseloads.

- The proportion of case manager survey respondents who said that no participants in their caseloads have English language limitations (23.7 percent) was roughly equal to the proportion who said that between one quarter and one half of their participants have such limitations (22.2 percent). Additionally, while 8.5 percent of the respondents said that between 51 and 75 percent of their caseloads have language limitations, 45.8 percent placed the proportion of their caseloads facing these barriers at less than 25 percent.

**Recommendation:** Given the complex array of economic and social (person-level) barriers that, in addition to the responsibilities of parenthood, impede the ability that significant numbers of Cal-Learn teens have to attend school, DPSS and the Cal-Learn administrators at the AFLP agencies might consider revising the targets set for the performance measures written into the Cal-Learn case management contracts.

Performance measures are necessary to gauge the success of the Cal-Learn program in achieving its stated goals. Moreover, performance targets are designed to ensure that the program achieves its potential for success. However, a number of case managers speaking in focus group interviews said that the targets currently have the effect of placing the emphasis of their work on meeting performance numbers at the expense of more meaningful support they would otherwise be able to give teens in their caseloads. Readjusting the targets might increase the quality of service case managers can offer, thereby improving outcomes in the long term.

- Case managers and GSWs speaking in focus group interviews were generally in agreement that GSW caseloads for Cal-Learn are overwhelmingly large.
- Two-thirds of the case managers interviewed for this study agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that they sometimes have trouble contacting GSWs.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should consider committing additional GSWs to the program so as to return GSW caseloads to the levels they were at in 2000.

Focus group interviews with both case managers and GSWs indicate that overwhelming GSW caseloads are a barrier to effective communication and coordination between the two parties. In turn, the access teens have to services is frequently delayed and overall customer service is compromised. A further decline in the number of GSWs working on Cal-Learn would likely further exacerbate these problems.

- Close to 57 percent of the respondents to the case manager survey agree “strongly”, and another 35 percent agree “somewhat”, that Cal-Learn teens do not understand the official Cal-Learn notices sent to them from DPSS. A number of case managers speaking in focus group interviews pointed, in particular, to

problems with the official Cal-Learn Orientation letter (CL1), which, they said, is difficult for teens to comprehend and lacks crucial information about the conditions under which program participants can make use of supportive services.

**Recommendation:** Although form CL1 is a standard, state-level form, DPSS may wish to consider ways to clarify its language, as well as ways to clarify the language and improve the presentation of all other written communication with Cal-Learn participants.

- In focus group interviews, a number of case managers remarked upon what they perceive as a lack of knowledge and awareness about Cal-Learn among some of DPSS' EWs. This appears to be an issue among regular intake EWs more than it does among minor parent EWs.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should take steps to ensure that all EWs are properly informed about the Cal-Learn program and properly trained in the program's rules and requirements.<sup>24</sup>

- Two-thirds of the case managers surveyed for this study agreed either "strongly" or "somewhat" that Cal-Learn teens sometimes have trouble arranging for child care with the Resource and Referral agencies. Three specific problems in this area were raised in focus group interviews: (i) Some case managers pointed out that teens are confused by the paperwork they must complete for the Resource and Referral agencies; (ii) some case managers said that coordination between the AFLP agencies and the Resource and Referral agencies is weak, and having an additional case manager for child care confuses teens; (iii) a number of Cal-Learn case managers observed that staff at the Resource and Referral agencies are often inaccessible to both program participants and the AFLP agencies.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider working with both the AFLP agencies and the Resource and Referral Agencies to improve their coordination with each other in the child care referral process.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider conducting a more detailed evaluation of the Cal-Learn program's child care referral process.

While survey results and remarks made in focus groups indicate a number of difficulties connected to the Cal-Learn program's child care referral process, the surveys and focus groups produced no consensus as to how these problems might be addressed. Cal-Learn case managers, for example, were by no means unanimous in their view that responsibility for child care arrangements should be given back to them. Some case managers felt this would streamline delays, but others felt the added responsibility would only compound what they see as an already overwhelming workload. There are no easy solutions to the child care challenges within the Cal-Learn program. At the

same time, access to child care is indispensable to program participants and to the overall success of the program. For these reasons, a more detailed evaluation of the Cal-Learn program's child care referral process may be valuable to policymakers.

- Comments made in focus group interviews revealed a considerable degree of contention between Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS and case managers at the AFLP agencies. Case managers, for example, complained of the difficulty they have in making contact with GSWs and/or obtaining necessary information from GSWs either over the phone or via fax. In the case manager survey, moreover, 50 percent of the respondents agreed “somewhat”, and an additional 13.3 percent agreed “strongly”, that they sometimes have trouble contacting the Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS. GSWs, in turn, complained that the information they receive from case managers—i.e. information regarding report card schedules or information needed for approval of supportive services, bonuses and sanctions—is often incomplete or incorrect.

**Recommendation:** DPSS and the AFLP agencies should consider organizing joint trainings to be attended by Cal-Learn GSWs and case managers. Moreover, GSSs and Cal-Learn supervisors at the AFLP agencies might also participate in joint trainings.<sup>25</sup>

Communication problems and misunderstandings between GSWs and case managers are likely related to other issues discussed in this report. The difficulties case managers have in contacting GSWs, for instance, is in all probability closely related to the large size of the GSW caseloads. Moreover, the incomplete and/or incorrect information GSWs receive from case managers is likely due in part to the large volume of paperwork case managers are expected to complete. While additional steps can be taken to deal with these issues, joint trainings might also be valuable to both case managers and GSWs. Such trainings would allow each side to clarify their working needs and expectations. In addition, joint trainings would give each side a better understanding of the challenges they face in their work and the commonality of their overall goals with respect to the program participants.

- In the case manager survey, 70 percent of the respondents agreed “strongly”, and another 21.7 percent agreed “somewhat”, that approval time for supportive services should be streamlined to eliminate long delays.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should consider permanently stationing a Cal-Learn program Deputy, or a person with the authority to make all necessary decisions regarding approval of supportive services and bonuses, in the El Monte GAIN office where the Cal-Learn GSWs conduct their daily duties.

DPSS' two- and three-tier approval systems for supportive services and bonuses have been implemented, per the Auditor-Controller, as part of an effort to safeguard against fraud. However, Cal-Learn GSWs and case managers generally agree that the approval procedures for supportive services cause delays. Under present conditions,



the approval process for some supportive services and bonuses must flow upwards from the GSWs to the GSSs, and then to the Cal-Learn Deputy, who is stationed in Pomona, away from the GSWs working in El Monte. Approval time for these services would be shortened if supervisory-level personnel with the authority to approve and deny all supportive services and bonuses were located in El Monte with the Cal-Learn GSWs.

- More than 80 percent of respondents to the case manager survey agreed either “somewhat” or “strongly” that changes in Cal-Learn program rules are sometimes not communicated in a timely manner.

**Recommendation:** DPSS and the AFLP agencies should work jointly to improve the flow of information throughout and between all affected levels of both organizations when changes are made to the Cal-Learn program’s rules and procedures.

- Focus group interviews indicated that Cal-Learn case managers frequently find themselves responsible for providing report card schedules to the GSWs before the schools themselves have released the schedules. At the same time, GSWs expressed frustration with how often the report card schedules they receive from the case managers are either incomplete or incorrect. These pieces of information suggest that there are often mismatches between the deadlines DPSS sets for providing report card schedules and the release of these schedules from schools.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should consider revising the deadlines given to case managers for report card schedules so they are more in line with the dates on which the schools release the report card schedules.

- More than 9 out of 10 respondents to the case manager survey agree “strongly” that school districts need to become more familiar with Cal-Learn and its requirements. In addition, 78.3 percent of respondents either agree “strongly” or agree “somewhat” that they sometimes have difficulties getting the schools to release the report cards of teens in their caseloads.

**Recommendation:** DPSS and the AFLP agencies may wish to consider increasing outreach efforts and informational campaigns designed to heighten awareness about Cal-Learn within school districts.<sup>26</sup>

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider appointing an official Cal-Learn liaison with the school districts who would answer questions schools have about the program and facilitate the flow of information between the school districts and the case managers at the AFLP agencies.<sup>27</sup>

**Recommendation:** DPSS may also wish to ask the school districts themselves to appoint a liaison or contact person who could assist DPSS and the AFLP agencies with resolving complications and with outreach efforts.

- Case managers and GSWs speaking in focus group interviews agreed that Cal-Learn regulations for the official accreditation of schools and equivalency programs are unclear and poorly defined. As a result, some program participants attend non-accredited schools or diploma programs

**Recommendation:** DPSS should work with State-level policymakers to develop more rigorous standards regarding the types of schools or equivalency programs Cal-Learn teens can attend. In particular, Cal-Learn participants should not be allowed to attend non-accredited schools or programs.

- More than 85 percent of the case managers surveyed for this study agree either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn teens in their caseloads sometimes have trouble enrolling in school because they are not eligible for child care and transportation assistance until after they are enrolled. Moreover, more than three-quarters of the respondents to the survey answered “yes” when asked if they ever encounter barriers in linking Cal-Learn teens with transportation and/or child care. In addition, 85 percent of the respondents agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn teens often have trouble attending school because their child care needs are not met.

**Recommendation:** DPSS should work with the AFLP agencies to clarify whether or not enrollment verification is required in order for teens to access transportation expenses.

Focus group interviews conducted separately with Cal-Learn case managers and GSWs generated conflicting information regarding whether or not teens require enrollment verification in order to access transportation services. While several GSWs told RES that verification is not required for transportation expenses, a number of case managers indicated that teens in their caseloads were not able to access these expenses without verification.

**Recommendation:** Preliminary child care services and transportation expenses should be made available to Cal-Learn teens so that they can enroll in school.<sup>28</sup>

DPSS and the Resource and Referral agencies pay back transportation and child care expenses for up to 30 days, but survey and focus group results suggest that this policy is not adequate to deal with the initial gap teens face when they need supportive services to enroll and get started in school. Program participants require preliminary supportive services. It should also be pointed out here that, just as some, though by no means all, case managers feel that child care referrals could be handled more efficiently if they were dealt with at the AFLP agencies (as opposed to being outsourced to the Resource and Referral agencies), a number of case managers also felt that supportive services more generally should be handled “in house” at the AFLP agencies.

- An overwhelming majority (95 percent) of the respondents to the case manager survey agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn teens living with their parents (nested teens) would be more motivated to get good grades and complete high school if the \$100 bonuses for satisfactory progress in school were paid directly to them instead of to the CalWORKs parent/payee.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider asking the State to reconsider statewide regulations regarding payment of the \$100 bonuses so that the money awarded for satisfactory progress in school is paid and mailed directly to the teens.

- Speaking in focus group interviews, a number of Cal-Learn case managers and program directors expressed the opinion that Cal-Learn rules and procedures—especially those guiding the paperwork case managers must complete, as well as those that limit interaction between the AFLP agencies and DPSS to hierarchically lateral communication—are overly rigid and cause unnecessary delays in the provision of services and intensive case management.

**Recommendation:** Where possible, DPSS may wish to consider bringing more flexibility to bear on procedures regarding paperwork and communication with the AFLP agencies. This flexibility could perhaps be negotiated in consultation with AFLP program directors and in joint trainings attended by case managers and GSWs.

- More than 95 percent of the respondents to the case manager survey agreed either “strongly” or “somewhat” that Cal-Learn paperwork takes too much time, is needlessly repetitive and does not allow enough time to provide proper case management to program participants. The problem of excessive paperwork burdens, and the perception that Cal-Learn’s administrative guidelines currently overemphasize documentation, emerged repeatedly in focus group interviews with case managers as well.

**Recommendation:** DPSS may wish to consider working with the AFLP agencies to streamline the paperwork that case managers are asked to complete.<sup>29</sup>

The paperwork case managers must complete as part of their duties does not merely consist of forms required by DPSS. Case managers are also asked to complete forms for the internal record keeping of the AFLP agencies, as well as forms for the State. However, DPSS may nevertheless wish to consider whether some of the Cal-Learn paperwork the Department requires of the Cal-Learn case managers is redundant or simply unnecessary. If the Department were to pursue this recommendation in combination with the suggestion that the Cal-Learn performance targets for the AFLP agencies be readjusted, the result would likely be the elimination of unnecessary pressures from the case managers’ daily work routine. With this, the case managers would have an increased capacity to provide meaningful case management to the teens in their caseloads.

## **Next Steps in the Cal-Learn Evaluation**

The data and insights offered in these pages can guide policymakers as they consider ways to make Cal-Learn more responsive to the person-level barriers faced by program participants, as well as ways to remove program-level barriers impeding the progress teens can make in school and towards graduation. Some of the recommendations provided here will be more feasible than others to implement, but even some enhancements along the lines suggested in this report can be expected to lead to improvements. At the same time, this report should be used to place the forthcoming second part of the Cal-Learn evaluation in a proper context. Part II will draw on DPSS administrative data, LODESTAR data from the State, and both focus group interviews and surveys conducted with Cal-Learn participants, in order to examine Cal-Learn outcomes. But without reference to the information given in this report—namely, information about the Cal-Learn program process and the barriers participants face as they make efforts to move through this process—any attempt to understand program outcomes will be incomplete.

## ENDNOTES

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<sup>1</sup> However, when the teens are 18-years-of-age, they are eligible to open their own CalWORKs cases and are no longer required to reside with their parents or legal guardians.

<sup>2</sup> County of Los Angeles' Board of Supervisors issued Board Order No. 38 on August 12, 2003.

<sup>3</sup> DPSS' first quarterly report covered the period from December 2003 through February 2004.

<sup>4</sup> These results are given in the letter and attendant attachments DPSS sent to the Board on February 28, 2005. A copy of this letter is included in Appendix A with all the correspondence DPSS sent to the Board regarding Board Order No. 38.

<sup>5</sup> Mauldon, Jane, et al. *Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. University of California, Berkeley: University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance, June 2000.

<sup>6</sup> Mauldon, Jane, et al. *Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. University of California, Berkeley: University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance, June 2000. Pp. 25-33, 40;

<sup>7</sup> Mauldon, Jane, et al. *Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. University of California, Berkeley: University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance, June 2000. Pp. 71-77, 86-90.

<sup>8</sup> Mauldon, Jane, et al. *Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. University of California, Berkeley: University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance, June 2000. Pp. 85-86

<sup>9</sup> Mauldon, Jane, et al. *Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. University of California, Berkeley: University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance, June 2000. P.107.

<sup>10</sup> An earlier, statewide evaluation of the Adolescent and Family Life Program (AFLP), conducted by the Maternal and Child Health Branch of the California Department of Health Services, showed the AFLP program to have similarly positive impacts in the areas of health and well being, as well as in the educational arena. This evaluation served to reemphasize the importance of the treatments that the AFLP program offers. For example, only 10.5 percent of the births to active AFLP clients (clients active as of November 30, 1997) were premature (P.20). The report also suggested that the AFLP program was largely successful in promoting school enrollment and attendance. Evidence for this was seen in the finding that four out of five active clients stayed in school or earned either a high school diploma or GED. Also, two in five active members who dropped out either re-enrolled or finished school (P.31). The CDHS evaluation also reported that, "(t)he potential for increasing parental involvement with the mothers and babies in AFLP is considerable as the vast majority of female clients reported feeling safe with the father of the baby—or the partner, if not the father of the baby" (P.43). Along with these positive findings, the CDHS evaluation also reported what the authors referred to as "program challenges." For example, an average of only one in four pregnant clients enters AFLP during the first trimester of pregnancy (P.16). Moreover, one quarter of the clients studied had less than a ninth grade education at the time of entry into the program—"by virtue of being young and/or having attained a level of education that is not appropriate to one's age (P.29). In addition, while the AFLP program has successfully promoted school enrollment and attendance, two thirds of the clients who dropped out of school by the time they entered the program were still not in school at the time of the most recent follow-up visit (P.31). (Mauldon, Jane, et al. *Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. University of California, Berkeley: University of California Data Archive and Technical Assistance, June 2000. Pp.126-127; Reynen, David J. *The Adolescent Family Life Program: Reporting Selected Outcomes for Clients Active in AFLP as of*

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November 30, 1997. California: California Department of Health Services, Maternal Child Health Branch, 1999).

<sup>11</sup> GEARS also automatically sends form CL2 to the Cal-Learn participant (and CalWORKs payee, if the Cal-Learn participant is nested).

<sup>12</sup> In focus group interviews conducted for this study, different groups of case managers offered somewhat differing versions of their responsibilities with respect to regular, in-person meetings with participants in their caseloads. One group of case managers simply noted that the managers are required to meet with the participants in their caseloads once per month. Another group said that, while they are supposed to contact each of their participants over the telephone once per month, they are required to have in-person meetings with each participant every three months. Two additional groups of case managers said they visit with 20 participants every month and each of the participants in their caseloads every other month. A fifth group of case managers quantified their responsibilities somewhat differently, noting that they are required to conduct 36 hours of face-to-face meetings per month. This slight variation between groups of case managers suggests that there is some flexibility exercised in determining certain parts of the responsibilities case managers are expected to fulfill.

<sup>13</sup> While the traditional practice for schools is to issue report cards four times per year, many programs vary from this practice.

<sup>14</sup> The exceptions to this are the Palmdale and Lancaster regions, which were not centralized into the El Monte GAIN Office until 2000.

<sup>15</sup> A 2.0 grade point average is generally indicative of an average in the “C” range (C+/C/C-). However, when schools have different methods for rating satisfactory progress, the case managers and GSWs are instructed by DPSS to use the school’s method for determining such progress.

<sup>16</sup> The rates the County sets for each performance outcome measure are assigned an Acceptable Quality Level (AQL), which is used to determine whether or not to award a bonus or impose a sanction. For three of the performance outcome measures – *new participants attending Orientation, school enrollment* and *report cards received* – the AQL is 5 percent. This means that if the County sets a performance outcome measure at 70 percent (as is done for the Orientation measure), then an AFLP agency will be awarded a \$100 bonus for every percentage point by which its performance exceeds 75 percent, and the agency will be penalized \$100 for every percentage by which its performance falls below 65 percent. The AQL for the fourth performance outcome measure, *graduation rate*, is 10 percent. Since the County has set the graduation performance outcome measure target rate at 50 percent, AFLP agencies are awarded \$100 for every percentage point by which their graduation rates exceed 60 percent, and the agencies are penalized \$100 for every percentage point by which their graduation rates fall below 40 percent.

<sup>17</sup> In an interview RES conducted at DPSS, Cal-Learn program administrators emphasized that the type of schools teens attend contribute significantly to the likelihood that they will graduate. Some schools, referred to as ‘storefront schools’; have no accreditation, and this can negatively affect the probability of graduation. The DPSS program administrators additionally pointed out that DPSS has been making efforts to carefully monitor schools to screen them from accreditation.

<sup>18</sup> RES conducted one focus group each with Cal-Learn case managers at Project NATEEN, Foothill Family Service and AltaMed Health Youth Services. Due to the large size and dispersed geographic area for which EL Nido Family Centers provides case management, RES conducted two separate focus group interviews with El Nido case managers—one in El Nido’s Pacoima office, which featured case managers working in the San Fernando and Antelope Valleys, and one in El Nido’s Carson office, which featured case managers working in the South Bay and South Los Angeles.

<sup>19</sup> The Cal-Learn Orientation letter (CL1) states that participants, “will receive case management services and assistance with child care and transportation costs.”

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<sup>20</sup> In commenting on the findings presented in this report, DPSS reviewers noted the following regarding whether or not Cal-Learn students attend schools that are recognized by the Department of Education:

*In meeting with Cal-Learn Contractors over the past 18 months, decisions were made regarding “acceptable” schools and public charter schools, which are not always accredited but are acceptable and meet the California Department of Education curriculum standards. Cal-Learn Contractors and GAIN Line staff were instructed that they may contact Cal-Learn Program staff for information regarding schools and whether or not they are a valid, acceptable school for issuance of a high school diploma.*

<sup>21</sup> It should be noted that the recently revised version of the Cal-Learn section of the GAIN Program Handbook includes new language to allow Cal-Learn contract staff to contact schools, via telephone, to verify school enrollment for Cal-Learn teens and to accept this as school enrollment until written verification is made available by the school. In keeping with the findings presented in this report, RES would encourage DPSS to both continue and increase efforts to implement the newly stipulated program enhancements designed to alleviate problems related to enrollment verification.

<sup>22</sup> Unlike the \$100 bonus for satisfactory progress in school, the \$500 graduation bonus is sent directly to the Cal-Learn participant, even if the participant is still nested with the parent at the time of graduation.

<sup>23</sup> Especially clear discussions of the association between teen pregnancy and the receipt of welfare assistance are found in the following sources: Adams, G. and R.C. Williams. *Sources of Support for Adolescent Mothers*. Washington, D.C.: Congressional Budget Office, 1990; Alan Guttmacher Institute. *Sex and America's Teenagers*. New York: The Institute, 1994; Hotz, Joseph V., Susan Williams McElroy and Seth G. Sanders. “The Impacts of Teenage Childbearing on the Mothers and the Consequences of those Impacts for Government”, in Maynard, R.A. ed. *Kids Having Kids: Economic Costs and Social Consequences of Teen Pregnancy*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute, 1997; Moore, K.A., et al. “Data on Teenage Childbearing in the United States,” Washington, D.C.: Prepared for the American Enterprise Institute/White House Working Seminar on Integrated Services for Children and Families, 1993; Werthheimer, Richard and Kristin Moore. “Childbearing by Teens: Links to Welfare Reform.” Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 1998. Also see figures provided by the Congressional Budget Office, National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy, 1999, 1996.

<sup>24</sup> According to DPSS, Cal-Learn program staff at the Department have recently recognized this issue and are in the process of developing training for CalWORKs Eligibility staff. In addition, Cal-Learn program staff have recently requested that a Cal-Learn EW conduct a short Cal-Learn presentation at CalWORKs District Offices during their general staff meetings to act as a refresher training.”

<sup>25</sup> In commenting on the findings presented in this report, reviewers at DPSS noted that Cal-Learn program staff have themselves recently recognized the need for such joint training sessions, particularly ones that would include Cal-Learn Line Operations at DPSS and Cal-Learn contract staff at the AFLP agencies, and which would focus on more effective communication between the two organizations. DPSS reviewers additionally indicated that a first joint training session of this kind was conducted in May 2006. In keeping with the findings in this report regarding communication and coordination between DPSS and the AFLP agencies, RES is of the opinion that the continuation of these joint sessions would be valuable.

<sup>26</sup> According to DPSS, Cal-Learn program staff is currently discussing outreach efforts with GAIN Cal-Learn line operations to increase awareness about the program. Given the remarks Cal-Learn case managers made regarding the lack of knowledge about the program within school districts, RES would encourage these discussions to continue so that present outreach efforts can be enhanced.

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<sup>27</sup> In considering the idea of appointing such a liaison, one AFLP Program Director felt it was important to note some of the complexities that might be involved. For example, there are roughly 60 different school districts in the County of Los Angeles. While some AFLP agencies work with a relatively small number of school districts, others work with more than twenty of them. For this reason, the Program Director expressed the view that some AFLP agencies might not simply require one liaison but three or four, each of which would have to be knowledgeable about the Cal-Learn program and about specific operational issues pertaining to the school districts they cover.

<sup>28</sup> According to DPSS, the Department has recently recognized transportation and child care gaps as they pertain to school enrollment, and in a newly revised version of the Cal-Learn section of the GAIN Program Handbook, language has been inserted to allow Cal-Learn participants to receive child care and transportation services to enroll in school. RES would encourage DPSS to both continue and increase efforts to implement these newly stipulated enhancements.

<sup>29</sup> In reviewing the findings presented in this report, DPSS noted that the Department has recognized the problems of procedural rigidity and excessive paperwork within the Cal-Learn program, and has been working with Cal-Learn contractors to improve these issues for the past 18 months. Because these problems emerged repeatedly in the focus groups conducted for this report, RES would encourage DPSS to both continue and enhance its efforts in these areas.



# **APPENDIX A**

## **Board Correspondence Regarding Cal-Learn**



Bryce Yokomizo  
Director

August 5, 2003

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**RECOMMENDATION TO AWARD AGREEMENTS TO  
ALTAMED HEALTH SERVICES CORPORATION, EL NIDO FAMILY CENTERS,  
FOOTHILL FAMILY SERVICE, AND SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA YOUTH AND FAMILY  
CENTER, AND TO DELEGATE AUTHORITY TO THE DIRECTOR, DPSS, TO SIGN AN  
AGREEMENT WITH CHILDRENS HOSPITAL LOS ANGELES TO PROVIDE  
CAL-LEARN CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES  
(ALL DISTRICTS - 3 VOTES)**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:**

1. Approve and instruct the Chair to sign the enclosed Agreements with four Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agencies; AltaMed Health Services Corporation, El Nido Family Centers, Foothill Family Service, and Southern California Youth and Family Center, for the provision of Cal-Learn Case Management services to Cal-Learn participants. The Agreements will be for terms starting September 1, 2003, or the day after Board approval, whichever is later, through August 31, 2006, at an estimated maximum cost of \$19,058,180, funded by CalWORKs Single Allocation. There is no additional net County cost (NCC) after the required CalWORKs Maintenance of Effort (MOE) is met. Funding for these Agreements is included in the FY 2003-04 Adopted Budget. Funding for future years will be included in the Department's annual budget requests.
2. Delegate authority to the Director, Department of Public Social Services (DPSS), to prepare and sign an Agreement, substantially similar to the attached sample

Agreement, with one AFLP agency, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, for the provision of Cal-Learn Case Management services to Cal-Learn participants. The term of the Agreement will commence September 1, 2003, or the day after Director execution, whichever is later, through August 31, 2006, at an estimated maximum cost of \$1,969,538 funded by CalWORKs Single Allocation. There is no additional NCC after the required CalWORKs MOE is met. Funding for these Agreements is included in the FY 2003-04 Adopted Budget. Funding for future years will be included in the Department's annual budget requests.

### **PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

State law requires counties to contract with AFLP agencies for the provision of Cal-Learn Case Management services. The County's Cal-Learn plan, which the Board approved on August 23, 1994, and which the California Department of Social Services certified, includes contracting with the AFLP agencies for the provision of these services.

The California Department of Health Services (CDHS) requires AFLP agencies to meet State regulations and requirements. CDHS contracts with all five proposed contractors to administer the AFLP program in Los Angeles. The agencies are in compliance with State AFLP standards.

The Cal-Learn program was first implemented through Board-approved, sole source contracts on February 28, 1995. The current three-year sole source contracts will expire on August 31, 2003.

The Cal-Learn program is a case management program tailored to meet the needs of parenting teens. Cal-Learn Case Management services are focused on teen parents completing their high school education. Bonuses, sanctions, and supportive services are used as incentives to encourage Cal-Learn participants to attend and progress in school.

Under the proposed renewal Agreements with the AFLP agencies, the Contractors will continue to provide DPSS with Cal-Learn Case Management services for an additional three years. The AFLP agencies will continue to provide specialized experience and expertise in meeting the unique service needs of our pregnant and teen parent population within a multi-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary network and will continue to abide by the State's AFLP guidelines.

### **Implementation of Strategic Goals**

The Agreements are consistent with the principles of the Countywide Strategic Plan Goal #3 (Organizational Effectiveness) to ensure that service delivery systems are efficient, effective and goal-oriented; Goal #4 (Fiscal Responsibility) to strengthen the County's fiscal

capacity; and Goal #5 (Children and Families' Well-Being) to improve the well-being of children and families in Los Angeles County as measured by the achievements in the five outcome areas adopted by the Board: good health, economic well-being, safety and survival, social and emotional well-being, and educational/workforce readiness.

### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

The estimated contract cost for the five Agreements is \$21,027,719 for the three-year term of the Agreements. The estimated annual cost of the five Agreements is \$7,009,239. Enclosed is a breakdown of estimated costs for each Agreement. These contract costs are claimed to the Single Allocation funds, and there is no additional NCC after the required MOE is met. Funding for these Agreements is included in the FY 2003-04 Adopted Budget. Funding for future years will be included in the Department's annual budget requests.

The Contractors will be paid monthly in arrears for the provision of Cal-Learn Case Management services. Contractors will be paid \$160.91 per month per active case in their respective caseload. The rates are firm and fixed for the three-year term of the Agreements and do not provide for cost-of-living adjustments.

The Agreements allow the Contractors to request advance payments once per fiscal year. The advances will be based on the estimated costs for no more than two months of services, and are not to exceed 25 percent of the total estimated annual cost of the contract. The Agreements will be in compliance with State regulations and require the Contractors to reimburse the County for advances prior to the end of each fiscal year and to return to the County any interest gained on these advances. As these advances will not result in receivables that will be outstanding over one year, they will not have a negative budgetary impact. The Chief Administrative Office and the Auditor-Controller have reviewed this provision and concur with our assessment.

These Agreements are not subject to contract maximums. The estimated costs may increase or decrease based solely upon caseload fluctuation. Recent caseload statistics were used to determine the estimated contract cost.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

The term of the Agreements will commence on September 1, 2003, or the day after Board approval, whichever is later, and will continue through August 31, 2006.

The five AFLP agencies are private, non-profit, community-based organizations that have the expertise in administering services to adolescent parents. The agencies have provided satisfactory services to the County for the past eight years and have been active partners in the administration of these services. The proposed Agreements will continue to foster effective partnerships with the County's community-based organizations.

The proposed Agreements include provisions to allow advance payments once per year. The Agreements include provisions to ensure compliance with State regulations on advance payments and requires that all payments be paid in full prior to the end of each fiscal year.

Childrens Hospital Los Angeles has committed to entering into an Agreement to provide Cal-Learn Case Management services, but due to logistical issues arising from obtaining authorization signatures, we are unable to file their final Agreement with this Board Letter. Accordingly, DPSS is requesting delegated authority to execute the final Agreement that will be substantially similar to the attached draft contract. This will ensure that effective no later than September 1, 2003, Cal-Learn services are available in all service areas of the County.

The award of these Agreements will not result in unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and will be in full compliance with federal, State, and County regulations.

The Agreements include the provision for the Contractor to first consider hiring County employees targeted for layoff or qualified former County employees who are on a reemployment list during the life of the Agreements when filling future vacancies.

The Agreements also require that the Contractor consider hiring participants of the Greater Avenues for Independence (GAIN) Program and General Relief Opportunities for Work (GROW) Program.

The County may terminate the Agreements with a 30 calendar day prior written notice. The Agreements also contain provisions that limit the County's obligation, if funding is not appropriated by the Board for each year of the Agreement.

The Contractors will not be asked to perform services which will exceed the Agreements' rates, scope of work and agreement term.

Provisions for the County's Jury Service Program have been included in the Agreements. The Contractors are in compliance with the Jury Service Program.

The Safely Surrendered Baby Law provisions are included in the Agreements, which require the Contractors to notify and provide a fact sheet to their employees regarding the Safely Surrendered Baby Law, its implementation in Los Angeles County and where to safely surrender a baby.

The Agreements contain Contractor Responsibility and Debarment language and have been approved as to form by County Counsel.

### **CONTRACTING PROCESS**

State law requires that counties contract with the AFLP agencies to provide intensive case management services. There was no solicitation for these Agreements.

DPSS has evaluated and determined that the Living Wage Ordinance Program (County Code Chapter 2.201) does not apply to the recommended Agreements. The Agreements are for non Prop A services. Counties are mandated under State law to contract with AFLP agencies for these services.

### **IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES (OR PROJECTS)**

The award of these Agreements will not infringe on the role of the County in its relationship to its residents, and the County's ability to respond to emergencies will not be impaired. There is no change in risk exposure to the County.

The award of these Agreements will enable the Department to continue providing Cal-Learn Case Management services to the County's eligible parenting teenagers.

### **CONCLUSION**

The Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors, is requested to return to DPSS one adopted, stamped Board Letter and three original signed copies of each Cal-Learn Case Management Services Agreement.

Respectfully submitted,

Bryce Yokomizo  
Director

BY:yjm

Enclosures

c: Auditor-Controller  
Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel

**CAL-LEARN CASE MANAGEMENT  
ESTIMATED CONTRACT COSTS**

<b>AFLP AGENCIES</b>	<b>Fixed Cost Per Participant</b>	<b>% of Caseload Share</b>	<b>Monthly Active Caseload</b>	<b>Estimated Monthly Cost</b>	<b>Estimated Annual Cost</b>	<b>Estimated Total Contract Costs</b>
El Nido Family Centers	\$160.91	44.1%	1,600	\$257,456.00	\$3,089,472.00	\$9,268,416.00
AltaMed Health Services Corp.	\$160.91	20.7%	750	\$120,682.50	\$1,448,190.00	\$4,344,570.00
S.CA Youth & Family Center	\$160.91	14.6%	530	\$85,282.30	\$1,023,387.60	\$3,070,162.80
Foothill Family Service	\$160.91	11.3%	410	\$65,973.10	\$791,677.20	\$2,375,031.60
Childrens Hospital LA	\$160.91	9.3%	340	\$54,709.40	\$656,512.80	\$1,969,538.40
<b>TOTAL</b>			3,630	\$584,103.30	\$7,009,239.60	\$21,027,718.80



MINUTES OF THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS  
COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA

Violet Varona-Lukens, Executive Officer  
Clerk of the Board of Supervisors  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Chief Administrative Officer  
Director of Public Social Services

At its meeting held August 12, 2003, the Board took the following action:

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The following item was called up for consideration:

The Director of Public Social Services' recommendation to approve and instruct the Chair to sign Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agreements with AltaMed Health Services Corporation, El Nido Family Centers, Foothill Family Service and Southern California Youth and Family Center, at an estimated maximum cost of \$19,058,180, funded by CalWORKs Single Allocation, to provide Cal-Learn Case Management services tailored to meet the needs of parenting teens to complete their high school education, effective September 1, 2003, or the day after Board approval, whichever is later, through August 31, 2006; also authorize the Director to prepare and execute an AFLP agreement with Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, to provide Cal-Learn Case Management services to Cal-Learn participants, at an estimated maximum cost of \$1,969,538, funded by CalWORKs Single Allocation, effective September 1, 2003, or the day after execution, whichever is later, through August 31, 2006.

The following statement was entered into the record for Supervisors Burke and Yaroslavsky:

"The County of Los Angeles provides CalWORKs case management and supportive services to over 3,600 teens through the Cal-Learn Program. Currently, there are five contracted service providers who have been certified and deemed eligible by the State to provide these essential services. These providers for services to teens are just as crucial to the County's welfare-to-work efforts as are the case managers for the adult population. However, for the past several years the Department of Public Social Services (DPSS) has not been actively monitoring the outcome measures.

(Continued on Page 2)



“A recent review of available data shows that in Fiscal Year 2002-03 only 11.8% of reported Cal-Learn teens graduated from high school (down from 18.9% the previous year) and only 14% maintained the required minimum ‘C’ grade point average. Additionally, only 42.7% attended the orientation session and less than half of those enrolled in school submitted their report cards for review.

“In light of the declining graduation rates and the need to improve overall academic performance, it is imperative that DPSS begin to actively track and report the outcomes of Cal-Learn in order for this Board to accurately assess the success and future needs of the program.”

Therefore, Supervisor Yaroslavsky made a motion that the Board take the following actions:

1. Adopt the Director of Public Social Services’ attached recommendations as amended to approve the Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agreements on a month-to-month basis, not to exceed three months;
2. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Social Services to:
  - a. Change the term of the contracts to one year, with two one-year options to renew;
  - b. Approve the renewal years based on contractor performance;
  - c. Determine appropriate performance measures and outcomes for the Cal-Learn Program and include such performance measures and outcomes in the contracts;
  - d. Negotiate for the renewal years a payment structure that is performance-based, but does not exceed the total cost approved by the Board for each AFLP; and
  - e. Monitor and evaluate the performance measures and outcomes for the entire Cal-Learn Program as well as for each AFLP agency; and

(Continued on Page 3)

3. Instruct the Director of Public Social Services to provide quarterly reports to the Board for one year, after the initial three months, with reports to include school enrollment rates, school grades, fluctuations in average school grade point averages, high school graduation rates, higher education and vocational education training placement and completion rates, employment rates, birth rates for teen participants and any other outcome measurements that are required by State and Federal governments; to be provided in similar format and concurrent to case management reports for the CalWORKs adult population.

Lisa Nunez, Chief Deputy, Department of Public Social Services, addressed the Board.

Supervisor Knabe made the following statement:

“Tracking successes of programs should not be limited to the Adolescent Family Life (Cal-Learn) Program, but to all programs providing direct services to our constituents such as administered by the Departments of Children and Family Services, Public Social Services, Community and Senior Services, and Probation. Reporting outcomes of some programs is now already occurring. The ceiling has been raised for service delivery in Los Angeles County as evidenced for example by the data collection efforts now underway by the Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council.

“All programs should not only be monitored for financial integrity, but also for successes and failures, in other words known as outcomes. Simply put, funds are given to support a particular program – does that program work?”

After discussion, Supervisor Knabe made a suggestion that Supervisor Yaroslavsky’s motion be amended to also instruct the Chief Administrative Officer, in consultation with appropriate County departments and the Los Angeles County Children’s Planning Council, to report back to the Board within 30 days on developing a methodology for tracking outcomes of services delivered in all social service contracts. Supervisor Burke accepted Supervisor’s Knabe’s amendment.

(Continued on Page 4)

In addition, Supervisor Burke made a motion that the Board instruct the Director of Public Social Services to report back to the Board within 30 days with a statistical report of the Adolescent Family Life Program broken down by provider, the number of people utilizing the program Countywide, and the number of people who are eligible to use the program because they are children of CalWORKs recipients.

After further discussion, on motion of Supervisor Burke, seconded by Supervisor Yaroslavsky, unanimously carried (Supervisor Molina being absent) the Board took the following actions:

1. Adopted the Director of Public Social Services' attached recommendations as amended to approve the Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agreements on a month-to-month basis, not to exceed three months;
2. Delegated authority to the Director of Public Social Services to:
  - a. Change the term of the contracts to one year, with two one-year options to renew;
  - b. Approve the renewal years based on contractor performance;
  - c. Determine appropriate performance measures and outcomes for the Cal-Learn Program and include such performance measures and outcomes in the contracts;
  - d. Negotiate for the renewal years a payment structure that is performance-based, but does not exceed the total cost approved by the Board for each AFLP; and
  - e. Monitor and evaluate the performance measures and outcomes for the entire Cal-Learn Program as well as for each AFLP agency; and

(Continued on Page 5)

3. Instructed the Director of Public Social Services to provide quarterly reports to the Board for one year, after the initial three months, with reports to include school enrollment rates, school grades, fluctuations in average school grade point averages, high school graduation rates, higher education and vocational education training placement and completion rates, employment rates, birth rates for teen participants and any other outcome measurements that are required by State and Federal governments; to be provided in similar format and concurrent to case management reports for the CalWORKs adult population;
4. Instruct the Chief Administrative Officer, in consultation with appropriate County departments and the Los Angeles County Children's Planning Council, to report back to the Board within 30 days on developing a methodology for tracking outcomes of services delivered in all social service contracts.
5. Instructed the Director of Public Social Services to report back to the Board within 30 days with a statistical report of the Adolescent Family Life Program broken down by provider, the number of people utilizing the program Countywide, and the number of people who are eligible to use the program because they are children of CalWORKs recipients.

7081203-38

Attachment

Copies distributed:

Each Supervisor  
County Counsel  
Executive Director, Los Angeles County  
Children's Planning Council  
Director of Children and Family Services  
Director of Community and Senior Services  
Chief Probation Officer

September 16, 2003

**TO:** Each Supervisor

**FROM:** Bryce Yokomizo, Director

**SUBJECT: CAL-LEARN CONTRACTS**

This is in response to your Board Motion of August 12, 2003, regarding the renewal of the Cal-Learn contracts with the following Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agencies: AltaMed Health Services Corporation, El Nido Family Centers, Foothill Family Service, Southern California Youth and Family Center, and Childrens Hospital Los Angeles. Specifically, your Board instructed me to report back with a statistical report of the Cal-Learn program broken down by provider, the number of people utilizing the program Countywide, and the number of people who are eligible to use the program because they are children of CalWORKs recipients.

You also expressed concerns relative to the performance of the AFLP agencies in providing services to Cal-Learn teens that ultimately help them graduate. On this point, we know from recent research that case management has made a difference in the lives of Cal-Learn teens. In June 2000, the California Department of Social Services (CDSS) contracted with the University of California at Berkeley for a statewide demonstration project. The findings determined that there was a significant increase in the number of teens graduating when they participated in this program. In 1999, a study by the California Department of Health Services found that pregnant teens who were provided case management services experienced more successful outcomes than did pregnant teens in the general population. The specific details of both studies are detailed further in this memo.

While we know in general terms that AFLP intervention has a positive impact on Cal-Learn teens, DPSS has done a poor job of monitoring these specific contracts for performance. We initiated these contracts in 1995, and subsequently renewed them without outcome measures or performance-based pay standards. Moreover, a review of contracts within my Department indicates that the vast majority lack adequate performance standards. Clearly, we have to do better, and we will be incorporating measurable standards in future contract renewals.

### **Background on Cal-Learn**

Cal-Learn is a mandatory participation program for CalWORKs participants who are under 19 years old (there is no minimum age limit), are pregnant or parenting, receive CalWORKs cash assistance and have not yet completed their high school education. The Cal-Learn Program is designed to reduce long-term welfare dependency by encouraging and assisting teen parents to complete their high school education.

The program uses a case management approach as well as financial incentives and penalties to encourage teens to use existing education services. State law requires that counties contract with AFLP agencies to provide intensive Cal-Learn case management services.

### **Statistical Report on the Cal-Learn Program**

CDSS mandates that each County collect information on the Cal-Learn program as part of its regular reporting on welfare programs. The data my Department has collected on this population has followed the State requirements. Over the 12-month period, from July 2002 to June 2003, an average of **3,437** teens a month participated in the Cal-Learn Program. Different periods will result in different average numbers participating. The 3,600 teens reported in our Board Letter of August 5, 2003, are based on caseload projections for the next three years.

In July 2003, 44,880 teen girls and 40,410 teen boys between the ages of 13 and 19 were children of CalWORKs recipients. Of these teens, a total of 3,128 were utilizing the program Countywide, **3,015** (6.7%) were teen girls and **113** (0.3%) were teen boys. These 3,128 Cal-Learn teens were provided services by the five AFLP agencies, as shown on the attached Table 1. It is important to note, that one of our largest AFLP agencies estimates that the potential pool of program participants is 7% of our total CalWORKs teen population. Our comparable 6.7% rate is a strong indicator that we are identifying our eligible Cal-Learn teens.

As mentioned earlier, CDSS contracted out a statewide, control/treatment random assignment demonstration project on Cal-Learn. The Final Report of the Demonstration was issued in June 2000 (*Impact of California's Cal-Learn Demonstration Project: Final Report*. UC DATA University of California, Berkeley). There were several findings from that demonstration that are important to our understanding of the successes and challenges of the Cal-Learn program.

- ❑ Among those 1,007 students who received the Cal-Learn "treatment," which is equivalent to the current Cal-Learn case management approach, **17.5%** graduated with a HS diploma or GED. This is compared to only **4.7%** graduation rate for the control group that did not receive Cal-Learn services. (The current graduation rate performance of our Cal-Learn teens is **11.8%**, and we hope to increase this percentage with higher standards of performance.)
- ❑ Graduations are incomplete and inconsistently recorded in the data used to track teens, so it is difficult to calculate an accurate graduation rate. But, among those who graduate, more graduate with the GED than with the HS diploma.
- ❑ Attendance rates decline the older the teen in Cal-Learn. This also complicates the calculation of graduation rate.

A 1999 study of the AFLP by the California Department of Health Services (Raymen, David. *The Adolescent Family Life Program: Reporting of Selected Outcomes*, DHS) found that pregnant teens who were provided case management services by AFLP agencies experienced fewer premature births (10.5% for the AFLP teens vs. 13.7% for the general population), fewer subsequent pregnancies, and increased percentages of youth who "reenrolled" in school after dropping out.

**Plans for Developing Performance Measures**

In addition to the information requested above, the Board Motion instructed us to include appropriate performance measures and outcomes for the Cal-Learn program in the contracts to be executed via delegated authority by November 30, 2003. Here are some of the measures that are being negotiated to assess the performance of the Cal-Learn contractors.

- ☐ A true recording of High School attendance and completion, and a calculation of an appropriate graduation rate.
- ☐ Indications of the teen's return to school, if they are dropouts, and a calculation of an appropriate school return rate.
- ☐ Rates of performing satisfactorily with overall grade point average of 2.0, or better.
- ☐ School enrollment rate.
- ☐ Orientation attendance rate.

I want to assure your Board that we will be incorporating into the Cal-Learn contracts performance measures that truly reflect the successes of the program. I have signed and executed the Cal-Learn Agreements on a month-to-month basis, not to exceed three months, effective September 1 and ending November 30, 2003. Finally, I will be coming back to your Board within 60 days with performance measures that are negotiated with the AFLPs for the next year of the contract.

I will continue to report to your Board on a regular basis on the status of this program.

BY:mh

Attachment

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

**Table 1**  
**Pregnant / Parenting Teens in Cal-Learn**  
**by Gender, Age, and Adolescent Family Life Provider (AFLP)**

**July 2003**

<b>Sex</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>El Nido Family Centers</b>	<b>Foothill Family Service</b>	<b>Childrens Hospital Los Angeles</b>	<b>Youth &amp; Family Services</b>	<b>AltaMed Health Services</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Female</b>							
	13	2	0	1	0	1	4
	14	17	5	5	5	6	38
	15	46	18	10	20	25	119
	16	158	31	29	51	73	342
	17	261	92	62	94	137	646
	18	531	176	107	172	253	1,239
	19	250	73	61	70	132	586
	20	17	6	4	8	6	41
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1,282</b>	<b>401</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>420</b>	<b>633</b>	<b>3,015</b>
<b>Male</b>							
	14	1	0	0	0	0	1
	15	2	0	0	0	0	2
	16	1	0	0	3	0	4
	17	6	4	2	1	3	16
	18	37	8	1	9	13	68
	19	9	1	0	2	9	21
	20	0	0	0	0	1	1
	<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>113</b>
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>1,338</b>	<b>414</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>435</b>	<b>659</b>	<b>3,128</b>



# County of Los Angeles

## DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES

12860 CROSSROADS PARKWAY SOUTH • CITY OF INDUSTRY, CALIFORNIA 91746  
Tel (562) 908-8400 • Fax (562) 908-0459



BRYCE YOKOMIZO  
Director



Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

YVONNE BRATHWAITE BURKE  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

May 18, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

*[Handwritten signature]*

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: **CAL-LEARN PROGRAM QUARTERLY REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OF  
DECEMBER 2003 THROUGH FEBRUARY 2004  
(BOARD ORDER #38 - AUGUST 12, 2003)**

Attached is the Department of Public Social Services' (DPSS) first quarterly report on the Cal-Learn program for the period of December 2003 through February 2004. Cal-Learn is a State-mandated program for pregnant or parenting teenagers. The County's five Adolescent Family Life Planning (AFLP) agencies provide intensive case management to assist teens in completing their high school education.

As instructed by your Board on August 12, 2003, the attached report provides information on the Cal-Learn program, Cal-Learn participants, performance outcome measures that were subsequently incorporated into the Cal-Learn contracts, and other pertinent State or federally required information. The report is comprised of the following:

- **Attachment A, Cal-Learn Caseload Characteristics** - Provides general demographic characteristics on Cal-Learn participants, broken down by contractor.
- **Attachment B, Cal-Learn Program Indicators** - Provides data reported to the State as part of DPSS' reporting requirements on the Cal-Learn program.
- **Attachment C, Cal-Learn Performance Outcome Measures** - Provides interim data on the three performance outcome measures that have been incorporated into the Cal-Learn contracts. These include the number of school enrollments, report card submissions, and GED/high school graduations.

The outcome measures reported are not reflective of the contracts' negotiated review periods of six months for school enrollment and report card rates and one year for graduation rates. Future reports will include rates on these three measures that will show outcomes over a longer tracking period and will coincide with the contracts' formal evaluation periods. We anticipate increased graduation rates across the annual review period, as most graduations occur in May and June.

As noted above, the performance outcome measures reported in Attachment C do not coincide with the contracts' negotiated review periods. Nevertheless, this interim data provides us with preliminary findings that will be used to identify areas of concern in the Cal-Learn program and/or in contractor performance. Through partners such as the Los Angeles County Office of Education, we will assist the providers in overcoming barriers related to report card schedules and other difficulties that the providers have encountered in working with this hard-to-serve population.

Your Board motion also provided a list of report elements, including indicators regarding post-high school education/vocational training, grade-point average (GPA), and teen birth rates. This information is not currently available. However, we are working with the contractors and will include this data in future reports.

Our next quarterly report will be a cumulative report that will cover the six-month period of December 2003 through May 2004 and will coincide with the contracts' evaluation period for school enrollment and report card submission rates.

BY:yjm

#### Attachments

c:     Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
          Chief Administrative Officer  
          County Counsel

# Cal-Learn Caseload Characteristics by Cal-Learn Provider

December 2003 - February 2004

	<b>El Nido</b>	<b>Foothill</b>	<b>Childrens Hospital</b>	<b>Youth &amp; Family</b>	<b>Alta Med</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number Served</b>	1,226	364	280	503	604	2,977
<b>Gender</b>						
Male	39	15	11	20	32	117
Female	1,187	349	269	483	572	2,860
<b>Age</b>						
Under 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 - 15	62	16	16	22	27	143
16 - 17	398	124	82	149	186	939
18	483	148	119	197	236	1,183
19	253	71	51	121	138	634
20 and Over	30	5	12	14	17	78
<b>Age at Entry</b>						
Under 12	0	0	0	0	0	0
12 - 15	195	55	49	82	91	472
16 - 17	507	142	111	203	237	1,200
18	512	163	115	215	268	1,273
19	10	4	4	3	6	27
20 and Over	2	0	1	0	2	5
<b>Primary Language</b>						
Armenian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Cambodian	0	2	1	21	2	26
Chinese	0	0	0	0	0	0
English	940	297	180	372	432	2,221
Korean	0	0	0	0	0	0
Russian	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spanish	285	63	99	109	169	725
Vietnamese	1	1	0	1	1	4
Other	0	1	0	0	0	1
<b>Ethnicity</b>						
American Indian/ Alaskan Native	0	0	0	1	0	1
Asian	8	7	7	44	9	75
Black	486	46	64	176	18	790
Hispanic	640	284	201	253	549	1,927
White	79	24	8	22	27	160
Other	13	3	0	7	1	24
<b>Employment Status</b>						
Employed	60	20	14	30	29	153
Unemployed	1,166	344	266	473	575	2,824

### Cal-Learn Program Indicators by Cal-Learn Provider December 2003 - February 2004

	El Nido	Foothill	Childrens Hospital	Youth and Family	AltaMed	Total
<b>Number Served in the Review Period</b> (Based on the current number of participants enrolled at least one day of the review period)	1,226	364	280	503	604	2,977
<b>Orientation Attendance Rate</b> Number of Participants Scheduled for Orientation in the review period	534	88	36	63	123	844
Number of Participants Who Completed Orientation in the Review Period	363	64	21	35	87	570
<b>Bonuses and Sanctions</b> Number of Participants Receiving a <b>Bonus</b> in the Review Period.	106	31	11	22	36	206
- Report Card Showed Satisfactory Progress (\$100 Bonus)	100	30	9	19	34	192
- High School Diploma Earned or Equivalent (\$500 Bonus)	9	2	2	3	2	18
Number of Participants Receiving a <b>Sanction</b> in the Review Period	49	27	6	30	69	181
- Report Card Showed Less Than Adequate Progress	2	0	0	1	6	9
- Report Card Was Not Submitted	47	25	6	29	64	171
- Submitting a Late Report Card Without Good Cause	0	2	0	0	0	2
<b>Number Receiving Supportive Services in the Review Period</b>						
Child Care	121	35	15	47	62	280
Transportation	203	40	17	73	106	439
Ancillary Services	42	20	3	12	20	97
<b>Number of Exemptions and Deferrals in the Review Period</b>						
Exemptions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deferrals	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Cal-Learn Performance Outcome Measures by Cal-Learn Provider**  
**December 2003 - February 2004**

	<b>El Nido</b>	<b>Foothill</b>	<b>Childrens Hospital</b>	<b>Youth and Family</b>	<b>AltaMed</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Report Cards</b>						
- Number of Participants with a Report Card Due in the Review Period	824	116	65	163	214	1,382
- Number of Participants Who Submitted a Report Card in the Review Period	323	75	18	83	95	594
<b>Average Monthly School Enrollments</b>	1,407	210	113	197	306	2,233
<b>GED/High School Graduation</b>						
- Number of Participants Who Received a GED/High School Diploma in the Review Period	28	3	2	4	5	42

County of Los Angeles  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

12860 CROSSROADS PARKWAY SOUTH • CITY OF INDUSTRY, CALIFORNIA 91746  
Tel (562) 908-8400 • Fax (562) 908-0459



BRYCE YOKOMIZO  
Director



Board of Supervisors  
GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

YVONNE B. BURKE  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

August 26, 2004

TO: Each Supervisor

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Bryce Yokomizo', written over the 'TO:' line.

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: **CAL-LEARN PROGRAM SEMI-ANNUAL REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OF  
DECEMBER 2003 THROUGH MAY 2004  
(BOARD ORDER #38 - AUGUST 12, 2003)**

Attached is the Department of Public Social Services' (DPSS) first semi-annual report on the Cal-Learn program for the period of December 2003 through May 2004. The attached report is a cumulative report that covers a six-month period. On May 18, 2004, you were provided with a quarterly report for the period of December 2003 through February 2004.

Cal-Learn is a State-mandated program for CaWORKs participants who are under 19 years old, are pregnant or parenting, and have not yet completed their high school education. The County's five Cal-Learn contractors provide comprehensive, intensive case management to assist teens in completing their high school education.

As instructed by your Board on August 12, 2003, the attached report provides information on the Cal-Learn program and performance outcome measures. The report is comprised of the following:

- **Attachment A, Cal-Learn Program Indicators** - Provides data reported to the State as part of DPSS' reporting requirements on the Cal-Learn program.
- **Attachment B, Cal-Learn Performance Outcome Measures** - Provides data on the three contractual performance measures. These include the number of report card submissions, school enrollments, and GED/high school graduations.

The performance measure for Cal-Learn orientation rates is reflective of the contract's negotiated review period of six months. Overall, the performance measure was exceeded that requires 70 percent of all newly enrolled Cal-Learn participants complete orientation. Attachment A reflects a cumulative total orientation completion rate of 75 percent. Meeting this performance measure is particularly important. Increased orientation completions could have a positive effect on the three performance measures: 1) school enrollment, 2) report card submission, and 3) high school completion.

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The performance measures reported for school enrollment and report card submission rates are reflective of the contracts' negotiated review period of six months. Overall, the performance measure was exceeded that requires 60 percent of all Cal-Learn participants who have completed Cal-Learn orientation be enrolled in school. Attachment B reflects a cumulative total school enrollment rate of 68 percent. Overall, the performance measure was not met that requires 50 percent of all school-enrolled Cal-Learn participants provide a timely report card. Attachment B reflects a cumulative total report card submission rate of 43 percent.

The performance measure reported for high school graduation rates covers an interim six-month review period. This measure is not reflective of the contracts' negotiated review period of one year for high school graduation rates. Attachment B for the interim period reflects a cumulative total high school graduation rate of 28 percent. As most graduations occur in May, June or July, the semi-annual report does not reflect June and July graduations, which should increase the number of graduations.

DPSS and the contractors are collaborating to improve program outcomes. Through partners such as the Los Angeles County Office of Education (LACOE), DPSS is assisting the contractors in the following manner:

- Working with the contractors to standardize a form used by alternative schools in providing a progress report when a report card or progress report is not normally issued by these schools;
- Facilitating the collaboration between LACOE and the contractors to offer independent study programs at the contractors' sites for up to 100 teen parents countywide;
- Collocating contractor staff in several district offices to outreach to potentially eligible teens, which affords the contractors an opportunity to meet with the Head of Household or teen to present a Cal-Learn overview and explain financial incentives (bonuses and sanctions); and
- Assisting the contractors in their outreach efforts by disseminating Cal-Learn material to hundreds of agencies that work with teens.

We continue to work with the contractors and will provide our next quarterly report in October.

BY:yjm

Attachments

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
County Counsel

**Cal-Learn Program Indicators by Cal-Learn Provider  
December 2003 - May 2004**

	<b>El Nido</b>	<b>Foothill</b>	<b>Childrens Hospital</b>	<b>Youth and Family</b>	<b>AltaMed</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Number Served in the Review Period</b> (Based on the current number of participants enrolled at least one day of the review period)	1,503	458	340	692	725	3,718
<b>Orientation Attendance Rate</b> Number of Participants Scheduled for Orientation in the review period	775	182	107	147	264	1,475
Number of Participants Who Completed Orientation in the Review Period	611	144	66	96	196	1,113
<b>Orientation Completion Rate</b> (Target Rate is 70% and is reviewed Semi-Annually)	<b>79%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>62%</b>	<b>65%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Bonuses and Sanctions</b>						
Number of Participants Receiving a <b>Bonus</b> in the Review Period.	189	69	22	56	77	413
- Report Card Showed Satisfactory Progress (\$100 Bonus)	175	63	20	47	67	372
- High School Diploma Earned or Equivalent (\$500 Bonus)	18	10	2	10*	10	50
Number of Participants Receiving a <b>Sanction</b> in the Review Period	103	43	18	77	145	386
Report Card Showed Less Than Adequate Progress	2	1	0	1	14	18
- Report Card Was Not Submitted	99	39	18	76	133	365
- Submitting a Late Report Card Without Good Cause	3	5	0	0	4	12
<b>Number Receiving Supportive Services in the Review Period</b>						
Child Care	192	56	22	74	86	430
Transportation	367	94	38	127	192	818
Ancillary Services	101	47	4	28	46	226
<b>Number of Exemptions and Deferrals in the Review Period</b>						
Exemptions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deferrals	0	0	0	1	0	1

\* Although this is a cumulative total of participants who received the \$500 bonus, participants may have received their GED/High School diploma prior to December 2003.



**Cai-Learn Performance Outcome Measures by Cai-Learn Provider  
December 2003 - May 2004**

	<b>El Nido</b>	<b>Foothill</b>	<b>Childrens Hospital</b>	<b>Youth and Family</b>	<b>AltaMed</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Average Monthly School Enrollments</b>	855	215	114	185	296	1665
<b>School Enrollment Rate</b> (Target Rate is 60% and is reviewed Semi-Annually)	<b>67%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>60%</b>	<b>73%</b>	<b>64%</b>	<b>68%</b>
<b>Report Cards</b>						
- Number of Participants with a Report Card Due in the Review Period	1023	212	152	294	385	2066
- Number of Participants Who Submitted a Report Card in the Review Period	380	139	49	125	195	888
<b>Report Card Submission Rate</b> (Target Rate is 50% and is reviewed Semi-Annually)	<b>37%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>32%</b>	<b>43%</b>	<b>51%</b>	<b>43%</b>
<b>GED/High School Graduation</b>						
- Number of Participants Who Received a GED/High School Diploma in the Review Period	31	10	2	7	13	63
<b>GED/High School Graduation Rate</b> (Target Rate is 50% and is reviewed Annually. This % is for the period December 2003 - May 2004 and does not include June and July graduations.)	<b>43%</b>	<b>37%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>14%</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>28%</b>

County of Los Angeles  
**DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SOCIAL SERVICES**

12860 CROSSROADS PARKWAY SOUTH • CITY OF INDUSTRY, CALIFORNIA 91746  
Tel (562) 908-8400 • Fax (562) 908-0459



BRYCE YOKOMIZO  
Director



Board of Supervisors

GLORIA MOLINA  
First District

YVONNE B. BURKE  
Second District

ZEV YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DON KNABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

February 28, 2005

TO: Each Supervisor

FROM: Bryce Yokomizo, Director

SUBJECT: **CAL-LEARN PROGRAM REPORT FOR THE PERIOD OF JUNE 2004 THROUGH NOVEMBER 2004 - (BOARD ORDER #38 - AUGUST 12, 2003)**

Attached is the Department of Public Social Services' (DPSS) report on the Cal-Learn program for the period of June 2004 through November 2004. This is the final report pursuant to the Board's instruction on August 12, 2003, for DPSS to provide quarterly reports to the Board for one year, after the initial three months. Previously on November 16, 2004, you were provided with a cumulative report for the quarterly period of June 2004 through August 2004.

Cal-Learn is a State-mandated program for CalWORKs participants who are under 19 years old, are pregnant or parenting, and have not yet completed their high school education. The County's five Cal-Learn contractors provide comprehensive, intensive case management to assist teens in obtaining the educational services necessary to earn a high school diploma or its equivalent and to assist teens with health and social services.

As instructed by your Board on August 12, 2003, the attached reports provide information on the Cal-Learn program and the Cal-Learn contractors' performance measures. The report covers a six-month review of Cal-Learn orientation, school enrollment and report card submission rates and an annual review of graduation rates, which are reflective of the review periods required by the contracts for these performance measures.

- **Attachment A, Cal-Learn Program Indicators** - Provides data reported to the State as part of DPSS' reporting requirements on the Cal-Learn program. It reflects a cumulative total orientation completion rate of 75 percent for the period of June 2004 through November 2004. The contractors exceeded the minimum standard of 70 percent for all newly enrolled participants to complete Cal-Learn orientation.

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- **Attachment B, Cal-Learn Performance Outcome Measures** - Provides data on three contractual performance measures. These include the number of school enrollments, report card submissions, and GED/High School graduations. It reflects a cumulative total school enrollment rate of 71 percent, a cumulative total report card submission rate of 57 percent and an annual high school graduation rate of 44 percent. The performance standards for these measures are 60 percent for school enrollment and 50 percent for both report card submission and graduation. Overall, four contractors exceeded three of the four performance outcome standards for the semi-annual period. Foothill Family Service exceeded all four standards for performance outcomes. No penalties were warranted for any of the agencies. DPSS continues to work with the contractors to increase the graduation performance outcomes.

On August 12, 2003, your Board delegated authority to the DPSS Director to 1) extend the term of the contracts for one year, with two one-year renewal options, and 2) approve the renewal years based on contractor performance. The contractors' overall performance in all performance measures justified extending the contracts for the first renewal year.

DPSS continues to collaborate with the contractors to discuss best practices that may help the contractors to increase their performance outcome measures.

BY:yjm

Attachments

c: Chief Administrative Officer  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors  
County Counsel

**Cal-Learn Program Indicators by Cal-Learn Provider  
June 2004 - November 2004**

	El Nido	Foothill	Childrens Hospital	Youth and Family	AltaMed	Total
<b>Number Served in the Review Period</b> (Based on the current number of participants enrolled at least one day of the review period)	1,948	582	434	893	899	4,756
<b>Orientation Attendance Rate</b> Number of Participants Scheduled for Orientation in the Review Period	606	148	123	147	238	1,262
Number of Participants Who Completed Orientation in the Review Period	438	113	82	121	188	942
<b>Orientation Completion Rate</b> (Target Rate is 70% and is reviewed Semi-Annually)	<b>72%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>75%</b>
<b>Bonuses and Sanctions</b>						
Number of Participants Receiving a <b>Bonus</b> in the Review Period. <sup>a</sup>	203	72	23	66	112	476
- Report Card Showed Satisfactory Progress (\$100 Bonus) <sup>b</sup>	155	46	19	43	80	343
- High School Diploma Earned or Equivalent (\$500 Bonus) (Based on a six-month review period - June 2004 - November 2004)	55	31	6	31	34	157
Number of Participants Receiving a <b>Sanction</b> in the Review Period	161	75	40	93	152	521
Report Card Showed Less Than Adequate Progress	1	2	2	9	6	20
- Report Card Was Not Submitted	160	73	36	79	141	489
- Submitting a Late Report Card Without Good Cause	1	1	2	6	8	18
<b>Number Receiving Supportive Services in the Review Period</b>						
Child Care	216	49	12	81	86	444
Transportation	477	131	69	181	231	1,089
Ancillary Services	139	44	22	68	68	341
<b>Number of Exemptions and Deferrals in the Review Period</b>						
Exemptions	0	0	0	0	0	0
Deferrals	0	0	0	0	0	0

<sup>a</sup>Represents the unduplicated number of participants receiving a bonus in the review period.

<sup>b</sup>Represents the duplicated number of \$100 bonuses issued. Teens can receive more than one \$100 bonus in the review period.

**Cal-Learn Performance Outcome Measures by Cal-Learn Provider  
June 2004 - November 2004**

	El Nido	Foothill	Childrens Hospital	Youth and Family	AltaMed	Total
<b>School Enrollments</b>						
- Number of Participants Enrolled in an Accredited High School or Equivalent Program in the Review Period	887	305	180	265	401	2,038
<b>School Enrollment Rate</b> (Target Rate is 60% and is reviewed Semi-Annually)	69%	79%	68%	73%	67%	71%
<b>Report Cards</b>						
- Number of Participants with a Report Card Due in the Review Period	662	183	125	212	314	1,496
- Number of Participants who Submitted a Report Card in the Review Period	373	123	85	92	179	852
<b>Report Card Submission Rate</b> (Target Rate is 50% and is reviewed Semi-Annually)	56%	67%	68%	43%	57%	57%
<b>GED/High School Graduation</b>						
- Number of Participants who Received a GED/High School Diploma in the Review Period	126	52	13	39	62	292
<b>GED/High School Graduation Rate<sup>c</sup></b> (Target Rate is 50% and is reviewed Annually)	41%	53%	33%	43%	47%	44%

<sup>c</sup>The GED/High School Graduation Rate reflects the annual review period of December 2003 through November 2004.

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BRYCE YOKOMIZO  
Director

LISA NUÑEZ  
Chief Deputy



Board of Supervisors

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First District

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Second District

ZEVE YAROSLAVSKY  
Third District

DONALD NABE  
Fourth District

MICHAEL D. ANTONOVICH  
Fifth District

January 10, 2006

The Honorable Board of Supervisors  
County of Los Angeles  
383 Kenneth Hahn Hall of Administration  
500 West Temple Street  
Los Angeles, California 90012

Dear Supervisors:

**RECOMMENDATION TO APPROVE AMENDMENTS  
TO THE CAL-LEARN CASE MANAGEMENT SERVICES AGREEMENTS  
WITH THE ADOLESCENT FAMILY LIFE PROGRAM AGENCIES  
TO EXTEND THE AGREEMENTS, INCREASE THE COST PER CASE RATE AND  
INCLUDE A COST OF LIVING ADJUSTMENT PROVISION  
(ALL DISTRICTS - 3 VOTES)**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT YOUR BOARD:**

Approve and instruct the Mayor to sign the enclosed Amendments to the Cal-Learn Case Management Services Agreements with the four Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP) agencies: AltaMed Health Services Corporation, Childrens Hospital Los Angeles, El Nido Family Centers, and Foothill Family Service. The Amendments extend the Agreements for eight months, effective one day after Board approval, increase the firm-fixed cost from \$160.91 to \$200.84 per case per month, include a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) provision, and revise the contracts' Statement of Work. Also, the Amendment for the AltaMed Health Services Corporation contract rolls over funds of \$23,444.

The Agreements do not include maximum contract amounts because they are caseload driven. Payment is based on the number of eligible teens who are enrolled and participate in the Cal-Learn program. The cost of the eight month contract extension is within the estimated three-year contract costs for the Agreements totaling \$21,027,719 for the period September 1, 2003 through August 31, 2006 and \$7,009,240 annually. Funding for these contracts is included in the CalWORKs Single Allocation for FY 2005-06 and there is no additional net County cost since the CalWORKs Maintenance of Effort requirement will be met.

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**PURPOSE/JUSTIFICATION OF RECOMMENDED ACTION**

Cal-Learn is a State-mandated program for CalWORKs participants who are under 19 years old, are pregnant or parenting, and have not yet completed their high school education. The County's Cal-Learn contractors provide comprehensive, intensive case management to assist teens in completing their high school education.

For the past six years, the firm-fixed fee of \$160.91 for Cal-Learn case management services in Los Angeles County has remained unchanged. The contractors reported that they need to retain the level of staff necessary to provide high quality services with the skills required to track the performance outcome measures.

Effective December 2003, the Board mandated that the Cal-Learn contractors meet three performance measures, school enrollment (60%), report card submission (50%) and graduation rate (50%). To track their performance, the contractors had to enhance their current tracking system to enable them to provide data to DPSS. The system enhancement together with the added administrative workload required for the Cal-Learn case managers to document participants' progress, has resulted in increased costs to the contractors. The contractors' additional responsibilities to provide detailed documentation to validate their performance, requires the kind of infrastructure and administratively trained staff that warrants a significant increase in the reimbursement rate. The recommended rate increase will compensate the contractors for the added workload and administrative expertise.

In addition, the contractors have reported that they are currently operating at a deficit because their cost of doing business is not commensurate with the existing reimbursement rate of \$160.91 per case per month. Also, the contractors have expressed that some of their Cal-Learn case managers are leaving for better paying jobs because wages are too low, thus creating a gap in services to Cal-Learn participants. The COLA provision in the Amendments complies with County policy and will compensate the contractors for the increased cost of doing business; costs associated with the increase in salaries for administrative and case management services and operating costs for equipment, supplies, mileage, facility leases, etc.

DPSS staff surveyed various counties in the State to determine the per case rate in the larger counties. The cost per case per month rate ranges from \$137.50 to \$266. The statewide average for the cost per case per month is \$209.58.

The contractors accepted DPSS' offer of \$200.84 per case per month based on the following:

21.1% of \$160.91	= \$194.86 (Consumer Price Index over the last 6 years)
Administrative costs	= \$ 5.98
Total Rate	= \$200.84

The new fee and COLA will allow the contractors to be reimbursed for the work performed.

The contractors have met all of their performance outcomes measures. As of September 2005, 65 percent of Cal-Learn participants were enrolled in high school, 90 percent submitted their report cards and 70 percent graduated from high school or obtained their GED certificate. This is a marked improvement from the figures reported for December 2004, in which 65 percent were enrolled in school, 63 percent submitted their report cards and 39 percent graduated or received their GED certificate. The contractors have worked very hard to achieve the performance outcome measures and will continue to do so.

DPSS will provide quarterly reports on the performance measures to the Board through the end of the contract term, August 31, 2006. The current Cal-Learn Agreements are extended on a month-to-month basis not to exceed three months effective December 1, 2005 through February 28, 2006.

In addition, the Amendment for the Cal-Learn contract with AltaMed Health Services Corporation (AltaMed) rolls over funds of \$23,444 to allow the contractor to establish an office in the Long Beach area to serve participants previously served by Southern California Youth and Family Center. On October 25, 2005, the Board approved these funds for that purpose. However, under the current contract, these funds were to be expended by November 30, 2005, and cannot be rolled over beyond this date. AltaMed is requesting that the additional funds be extended beyond November 30, 2005 because they have yet to expend the funds. In the interim, AltaMed is serving Cal-Learn participants out of their Lynwood office and will continue to serve this population through the next contract period.

#### **Implementation of Strategic Plan Goals**

The Amendments are consistent with the principles of the Countywide Strategic Plan Goal #3 (Organizational Effectiveness) to ensure that service delivery systems are efficient, effective and goal-oriented; Goal #4 (Fiscal Responsibility) to strengthen the County's fiscal capacity; and Goal #5 (Children and Families' Well-Being) to improve the well-being of children and families in Los Angeles County as measured by the achievements in the five outcome areas adopted by the Board: good health; economic well-being; safety and survival; social and emotional well-being; and educational/workforce readiness.



### **FISCAL IMPACT/FINANCING**

These Agreements are not subject to contract maximums. The estimated costs may increase or decrease based solely upon caseload fluctuation. The cost of the eight month contract extension is within the estimated three-year contract costs for the Agreements totaling \$21,027,719 for the period September 1, 2003 through August 31, 2006 and \$7,009,240 annually. Funding for these contracts is included in the CalWORKs Single Allocation for FY 2005-06 and there is no additional net County cost since the CalWORKs Maintenance of Effort requirement will be met.

### **FACTS AND PROVISIONS/LEGAL REQUIREMENTS**

The Amendments extend the Agreements for eight months, commencing one day after Board approval through August 31, 2006.

The County is authorized to provide these services under California's Welfare and Institutions Code, Section 11331 through 11334 and California Department of Social Services' (CDSS) Manual of Policies and Procedures, Chapter 42-762 through 42-769, and the COUNTY's Cal-Learn Plan.

The agencies have provided satisfactory services to the County for the past ten years and have been active partners in the administration of these services. The Cal-Learn program was first implemented through Board-approved, sole source contracts on February 28, 1995. The proposed Agreements will continue to foster effective partnerships with the County's community-based organizations.

The award of these Amendments will not result in unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and will be in full compliance with federal, State, and County regulations.

The County may terminate the Agreements with a 30 calendar day prior written notice.

The contractors will not be asked to perform services which will exceed the Agreements' rates, scope of work, and agreement term.

### **CONTRACTING PROCESS**

State law requires that counties contract with the AFLP agencies to provide intensive case management services. Thus, these Agreements were not the result of a competitive solicitation but rather procurements by negotiations.

**IMPACT ON CURRENT SERVICES**

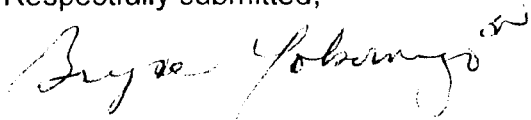
The execution of these Amendments will not infringe on the role of the County in its relationship to its residents, and the County's ability to respond to emergencies will not be impaired. There is no change in risk exposure to the County. This Amendment will not affect the current services being provided under this agreement.

The award of these Amendments will enable the Department to continue providing Cal-Learn case management services to the County's eligible pregnant and parenting teenagers.

**CONCLUSION**

The Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors, is requested to return one (1) adopted stamped Board Letter and three (3) original signed copies of each amendment to the Director of DPSS.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Bryce Yokomizo".

Bryce Yokomizo  
Director

BY:yjm

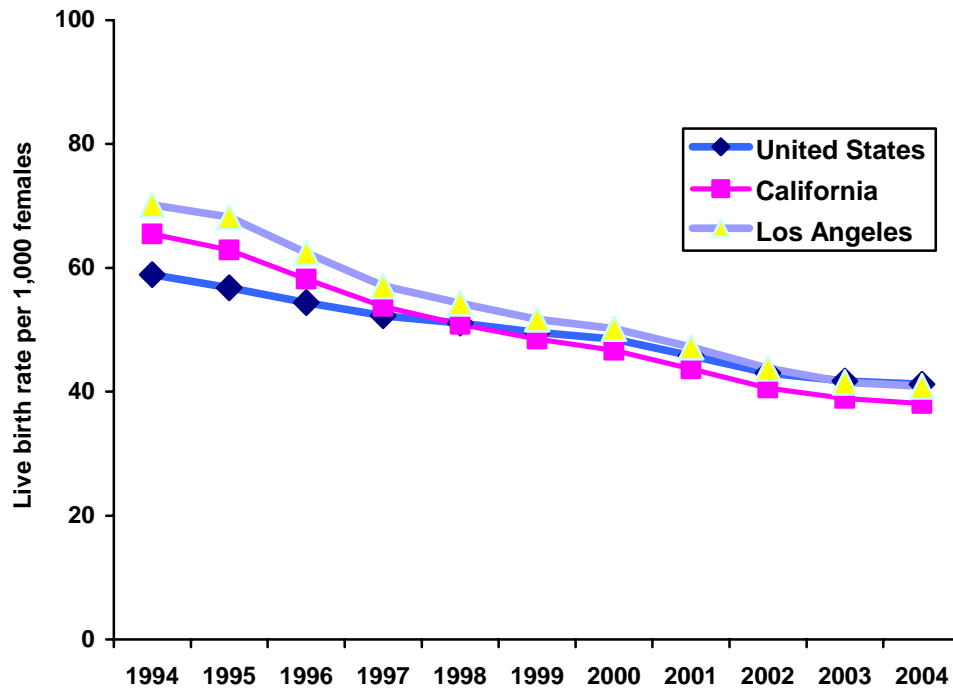
Enclosures

c: Auditor-Controller  
Chief Administrative Officer  
County Counsel  
Executive Officer, Board of Supervisors

# **APPENDIX B**

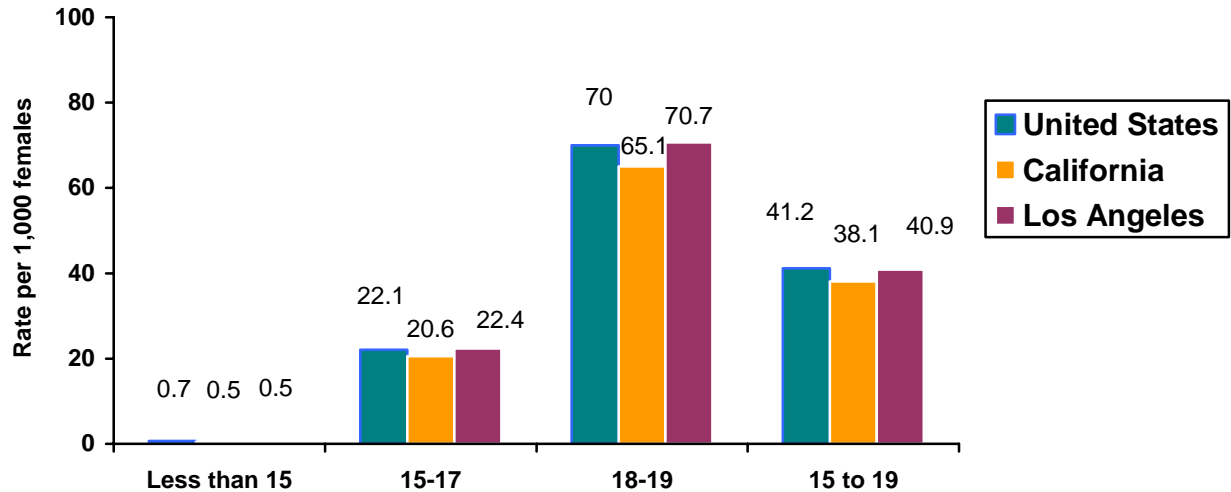
## **Birth and Fertility Rates**

# **Teen Birth Rates (Live Births per 1,000 Females, Age 15 - 19 Years) in The United States, California, and Los Angeles County, 1994 - 2004**



Source: Center for National Health Statistics, preliminary birth rates for 2004.  
 State of California Department of Health Services, Birth Records.  
 State of California, Department of Finance Population Estimates. Los Angeles County rates  
 were compiled by LAC DHS Data Collection and Analysis Unit.

## Age-Specific Birth Rates Comparison, United States, California, and Los Angeles County, 2004



Source: Center for National Health Statistics, preliminary birth rates for 2004.  
 State of California, Department of Health Services, Birth Records.  
 State of California, Department of Finance, 2004 Population: 2000-2050 Race/Ethnicity  
 Population Projections with Age and Sex Detail, May 2004  
 For women less than 15, rates are based on the 10 to 14 years of age.

**Birth Rates\* for teen mothers between ages of 15 and 19 by race/ethnicity, Los Angeles County, 1994 to 2004.**

Race/Ethnicity	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
California	65.5	62.9	58.2	53.8	50.9	48.5	46.7	43.7	40.6	38.9	38.1
Los Angeles Total**	70.2	68.2	62.4	57.1	54.3	51.7	50.2	47.2	43.8	41.5	40.9
White	25.2	23.5	21.1	18.3	17.9	16.5	15.2	13.7	11.4	10.4	9.4
Black	85.4	82.4	74.6	68.7	64.3	57.6	53.8	43.8	39.2	37.3	36.3
Asian/Pacific Islander	12.1	12.2	11.0	10.4	10.5	10.7	9.4	8.9	9.3	8.7	8.2
American Indian	36.4	33.3	23.3	23.7	22.9	14.3	16.0	12.8	9.4	6.9	5.1
Latino	102.5	100.0	91.9	84.4	79.7	76.2	74.6	70.9	66.2	62.6	62.2

Source: Births: Birth Statistical Master Files, State of California, Department of Health Services. Population denominators: 2000-2004: State of California, Department of Finance (DOF), Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 2000-2050, May 2004 and to allocate multiple-race group to single race groups used CA DOF's 'Suggested Allocations of the Multirace Category for Use with Population Projections by Race/Ethnicity for California and It's Counties 2000-2050', Sacramento, California, June 2004; for 1994-1999 population: CA DOF Race/Ethnic Population with Age and Sex Detail, 1990-1999, May 2004. Rates compiled by LAC DHS Data Collection and Analysis Unit.

\* per 1,000 teen mothers.

\*\* Includes births to mothers of unknown or other race.

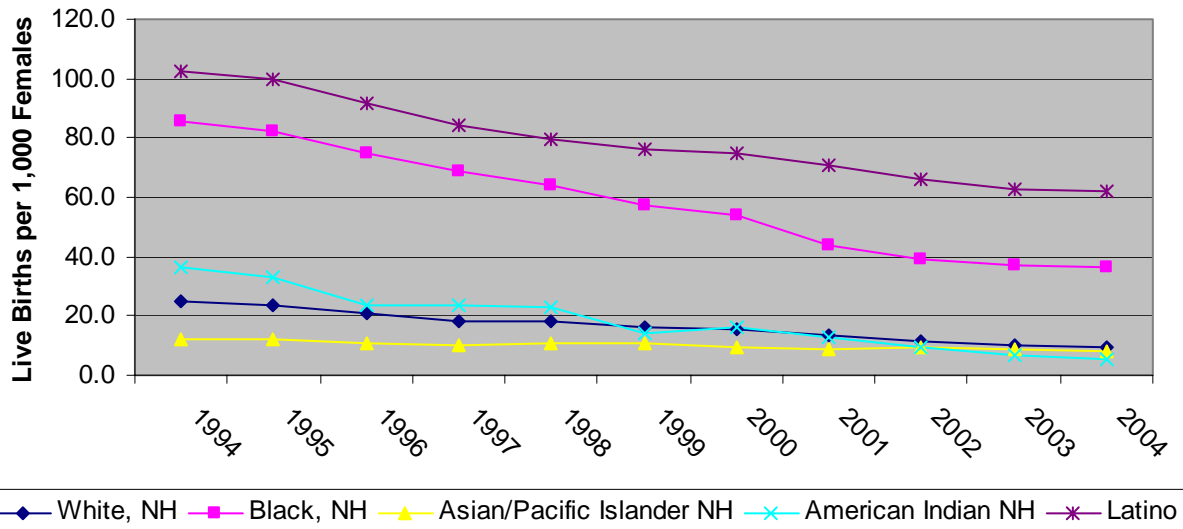
**Births to teen mothers between ages of 15 and 19 by race/ethnicity, Los Angeles County, 1994 to 2004.**

Race/Ethnicity	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
California	68,198	66,644	63,118	59,851	58,141	56,577	55,373	52,966	50,201	49,330	49,737
Total***	22,091	21,612	19,958	18,530	17,923	17,143	16,608	15,550	14,510	13,997	14,182
White	1,979	1,827	1,635	1,420	1,381	1,249	1,136	1,031	879	833	771
Black	2,846	2,739	2,464	2,288	2,169	1,968	1,896	1,617	1,504	1,504	1,508
Asian/Pacific Islander	460	478	445	439	456	472	401	351	339	295	283
American Indian	54	53	41	46	48	32	38	31	23	17	13
Latino	16,725	16,506	15,356	14,322	13,840	13,394	13,110	12,464	11,727	11,322	11,573

Source: Births: Birth Statistical Master Files, State of California, Department of Health Services.

\*\*\* Includes births to mothers of unknown or other race.

### Birth Rates Teens 15 to 19 Years, by Race/Ethnicity, Los Angeles County 1994 - 2004



Source: Los Angeles County, Department of Health Services, Data Collection and Analysis Unit.

NH= Non-Hispanic.

# **APPENDIX C**

## **Methodological Appendix And Survey Results**



## **Focus Group Methodology**

## **The Purposes and Advantages Of Qualitative Methodology**

Moderated focus group interviews are focused yet informal discussions guided by predetermined, open-ended questions. The questions used to guide discussion in the focus groups conducted for this study are included in this appendix. These questions were designed to reveal the perceptions and experiences that Cal-Learn case managers at the AFLP agencies, Cal-Learn GSWs at DPSS, and AFLP program directors have in attending to their duties for the Cal-Learn program. The advantage of this qualitative methodology is that it can capture the knowledge and the lived experience of people who have daily encounters with Cal-Learn participants and practical familiarity with the program's administrative procedures. Focus group interviews thus generate detailed, micro-level data that provide a concrete sense of how case managers, GSWs and AFLP program directors respond to the daily circumstances that shape their work.

In analyzing the views of case managers, GSWs, and AFLP program directors, and in presenting selected remarks made in focus group interviews, RES attempted to provide readers with points of view that represent commonly held opinions within each group of workers. Where possible, RES also attempted to present remarks that were in agreement with data generated through the case manager survey. Analytical categories were deduced based on the repeated observations of focus group participants. These categories, in turn, enabled perceived patterns in the Cal-Learn program process to be clearly identified. However, while the remarks offered in the focus group interviews can help readers form an understanding of shared experiences and perceptions, they may not represent the views of all case managers, program directors and all GSWs working with Cal-Learn.

To correctly interpret the focus group findings offered in this report, it is important to understand the advantages and limitations of the qualitative approach guiding focus group research, as well as the way in which this approach provides information that differs from, but can complement, information provided through quantitative methodologies. Focus group findings provide elaborated, qualitative information that is unavailable through statistics – for this report, the interviews provided an in-depth exploration of perceptions and experiences with the Cal-Learn program and a concrete sense of how things happen in the daily lives of the people who work closely with the program and its participants. Focus groups also hold the possibility of discovering new information that may not have been previously known through the use of other methods of inquiry.

However, in interpreting focus group interviews, readers must understand that they have important limitations. While the focus groups conducted for this report help to humanize the Cal-Learn program process, focus group participants may not, as mentioned above, be representative of all people carrying out similar duties. Focus groups provide neither generalization nor verification of findings. However, the objective of focus group research is not to verify what participants say, but rather to tap experiences and perceptions that may affect their work and involvement with the Cal-Learn program; that is, neither verification nor generalization are primary research goals of focus group research. Nonetheless, a degree of generalization can be achieved

when focus group and survey findings converge and agree.

Focus group participants for this study sometimes spoke sharply and critically. Focus group facilitators encouraged openness and assured participants that their anonymity and privacy were protected by Federal and State laws. The names of all quoted focus group participants were changed in the text of this report. It is important to note that the quotes given in this report represent case managers, GSWs and AFLP program directors literally speaking in their own words, and that everyday, unrehearsed speech is very different from carefully crafted, grammatically correct written text. The purpose of quoting their words verbatim, which is in keeping with accepted conventions for qualitative research, is to capture the spontaneity and unedited insights of an informal discussion.

### Focus Group Recruitment

At the time of this writing, there were 69 case managers working at the four AFLP agencies with which DPSS contracts for Cal-Learn intensive case management services. This limited number of case managers, combined with their geographic dispersal throughout the various AFLP offices in the County of Los Angeles, made it infeasible for RES to apply systematic and restrictive guidelines in recruiting participants for the case manager focus group interviews.

The case managers participating in the focus group sessions either volunteered to do so or were selected to do so by their supervisors at each AFLP agency. This introduces potential sources of bias into the information emerging out of the case manager focus group interviews. While this possibility for bias in no way undermines the value of these focus group interviews, it nevertheless further underscores the subjective nature of case manager remarks and should be kept in mind by readers. Table C1 shows the number of Cal-Learn case managers at each AFLP agency, as well as the number of case managers that participated in the focus group sessions for this report.

**TABLE C1. Focus Group Participation at Each AFLP Agency**

<b>AFLP Agency</b>	<b>Case Managers Employed Overall</b>	<b>Case Managers Participating in Focus Groups*</b>
AltaMed Youth Services	17	6
El Nido Family Centers	28	13
Foothill Family Service	17	6
Project Nateen	6	4
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>29</b>

\*The data entry personnel participating in the focus group sessions at each AFLP agency are not included in the tallies provided in this column.

The number of GSWs working for the Cal-Learn program at DPSS is also limited at 12. However, since all of these GSWs work in the El Monte GAIN office, RES was able to arrange for all 12 to participate in a single GSW focus group session. There are four AFLP program directors – one from each AFLP agency. Although the agencies are geographically dispersed, the program directors agreed to meet with RES jointly for an interview session.

## **Focus Group Consent Forms**

### **Consent to Act as a Research Subject**

Manuel Moreno, Nancy Salem, and Max Stevens of the Service Integration Branch, Chief Administrative Office, are conducting focus groups with Cal-Learn Case Managers and Data Entry personnel. The purpose of these focus group sessions is to learn about your role in Cal-Learn and to better understand the program processes.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will take part in a focus group that will last approximately two hours. The focus group will be comprised of about ten other participants.

If you have other questions or wish to report a research related problem, you may call Max Stevens at (213) 974-5613.

### **Participant Statement of Understanding and Consent**

Manuel Moreno, Nancy Salem, and Max Stevens have explained the study to me and answered my questions. I understand that participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I understand that I may decline to answer any question(s) that make me feel uncomfortable. I also understand that I may withdraw my participation in the study at any time and that my choice to refuse to answer any question(s) or to withdraw from the study will not affect my work.

I understand that the focus group sessions will be audio taped. I understand that if I decide not to participate at any point, my contribution to the focus group will be omitted from the study.

I understand that the confidentiality of my research records will be strictly maintained in accordance with all Federal and State laws concerning the protection of human research subjects. I understand that my name and any identifying information will be withheld from all reports resulting from this research.

I have received a copy of this document to keep.

Based on the foregoing, I agree to participate in the focus group.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name – Please Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

### **Consent to Act as a Research Subject**

Manuel Moreno, Max Stevens, and Nancy Salem of the Service Integration Branch, Chief Administrative Office, are conducting focus groups with Cal-Learn GSWs. The purpose of these focus group sessions is to learn about your role in Cal-Learn and to better understand the program processes.

If you agree to participate in this study, you will take part in a focus group that will last approximately two hours. The focus group will be comprised of about ten other participants.

If you have other questions or wish to report a research related problem, you may call Max Stevens at (213) 974-5613.

### **Participant Statement of Understanding and Consent**

Manuel Moreno, Max Stevens, and Nancy Salem have explained the study to me and answered my questions. I understand that participation in this research is entirely voluntary. I understand that I may decline to answer any question(s) that make me feel uncomfortable. I also understand that I may withdraw my participation in the study at any time and that my choice to refuse to answer any question(s) or to withdraw from the study will not affect my work.

I understand that the focus group sessions will be audio taped. I understand that if I decide not to participate at any point, my contribution to the focus group will be omitted from the study.

I understand that the confidentiality of my research records will be strictly maintained in accordance with all Federal and State laws concerning the protection of human research subjects. I understand that my name and any identifying information will be withheld from all reports resulting from this research.

I have received a copy of this document to keep.

Based on the foregoing, I agree to participate in the focus group.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Participant's Name – Please Print

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

## **Focus Group Questions**



# **Focus Group Questions**

## **Cal-Learn Case Managers and Data Entry Personnel**

**Focus Groups to be Conducted by  
the County of Los Angeles  
Research and Evaluation Services,  
Service Integration Branch,  
Chief Administrative Office**

### **Assurance of Confidentiality**

Cal-Learn case manager focus group members will be told that information they provide is to be written into a report but that nothing they say will be attributed directly to them. Focus groups will be audio taped, and transcriptions from the focus groups will be written and analyzed for the final report.

Consent forms for focus group participations will be signed by all participants, and will be kept on file for five years.

### **Purpose of the Study**

We are conducting a study of the Cal-Learn program for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. We will be asking you to respond to a series of discussion questions during this session, which will last between 90 minutes and two hours. Please think of us during this session as students – *you are our teachers*. We are especially interested in tapping into your expertise in order to gain a better understanding of how Cal-Learn works and, in particular, the challenges you face in providing your clients with intensive case management. *Only you can provide us with the information we need to write this report*. Based on what is discussed in this session today, the report we write will include a series of recommendations for steps that can be taken to make your work less daunting.

### **Introductions:**

The research group will introduce themselves to the focus groups participants.

Focus Group Rules: *give your names when you speak*; one person speaks at a time; give others time to talk.

## Discussion Questions

1. We're interested in gaining a better understanding of your work. Can we please go around the table and have you describe the kind of work you do for the Cal-Learn program with the Cal-Learn teens in your caseload, as well as the kinds of relationships you develop with these teens? How long have you been working in the Cal-Learn program? If you want you can also tell us a little bit about your background in working in this field and with the population you serve.

[Probe for examples of relationships if necessary].

2. What would you say are the largest challenges you face in the work you do with the teens in your caseload? If possible, can you talk about:
  - a. The challenges and barriers posed by the difficult life situations of your clients (i.e. those stemming from their economic circumstances, the communities in which they live, the school systems that serve them, etc.),

And

  - b. The challenges and barriers posed by the way Cal-Learn is organized and administered as a program.

[Probe for examples of each]

3. How does the size of your caseload affect your ability to provide your clients with the intensive case management they need?

[Probe for examples]

4. How do you define success in the work you do with Cal-Learn teens? What has to happen in order for you to consider your work with an individual client successful? If possible, can you tell us the proportion of clients in your caseload that become 'success stories'?

[Probe: Can you give examples of success stories and/or examples of clients that had the potential to succeed but did not, for whatever reason ]

5. Can you tell us the things you like about your work and the things you dislike about your work?

[Probe for examples]

6. Do you have any recommendations for steps that could be taken that would help you do your job more effectively and increase the proportion of success stories in your caseload? Is there anything you would like to be able to do for Cal-Learn teens but are presently unable to do? What could be done to change this?

## **Focus Group Questions: Cal-Learn GSWs**

Focus Groups to be Conducted by  
The County of Los Angeles  
Research and Evaluation Services,  
Service Integration Branch,  
Chief Administrative Office

### **Assurance of Confidentiality**

GSW focus group members will be told that information they provide is to be written into a report but that nothing they say will be attributed directly to them. Focus groups will be audio taped, and transcriptions from the focus groups will be written and analyzed for the final report.

Consent forms for focus group participations will be signed by all participants, and will be kept on file for five years.

### **Purpose of the Study**

We are conducting a study of the Cal-Learn program for the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. We will be asking you to respond to a series of discussion questions during this session, which will last between 90 minutes and two hours. Please think of us during this session as students – *you are our teachers*. We are especially interested in tapping into your expertise in order to gain a better understanding of how Cal-Learn works and, in particular, the challenges you face in the administration of the program. *Only you can provide us with the information we need to write this report.* Based on what is discussed in this session today, the report we write will include a series of recommendations for steps that can be taken to make your work less daunting.

### **Introductions:**

The research group will introduce themselves to the focus groups participants.

Focus Group Rules: give your names when you speak; one person speaks at a time; give others time to talk.

## Discussion Questions

1. We're interested in gaining a better understanding of your work. Can we please go around the table and have you describe the kind of work you do for the Cal-Learn program. Do you work exclusively on Cal-Learn cases? What type of work experience did you have prior to working as a Cal-Learn GSW?
2. What would you say are the largest challenges you face in the work you do for the Cal-Learn program? If possible, can you talk about:
  - (a) The challenges and barriers posed by the difficult life situations of Cal-Learn participants, and
  - (b) The challenges and barriers posed by the way Cal-Learn is organized and administered as a program, and
  - (c) The challenges and barriers you face in the course of the interactions you have with the Cal-Learn case managers.
3. Can you tell us about how pregnant teens are identified for participation in the Cal-Learn program? Once they are identified, do you have any direct interaction with them? What role do you play in assessing and approving teens for transportation and child care services?
4. Do you feel as though you are facilitating access to services for Cal-Learn teens in a timely manner? Do you think payments for specialized supportive services, transportation and child care are processed in a timely fashion? If not, why not?
5. Are there any problems you encounter that are related to school systems, such as the accreditation of particular schools or the way the school systems are organized and administered?
6. To help us better understand the process of determining non-compliance and imposing and curing sanctions, please walk us through the stages of the non-compliance process as it pertains to Cal-Learn teens. In cases of non-compliance, how is the good cause criteria applied? What are the mechanisms through which these criteria are applied? (Probe: do you take the Cal-Learn case managers' recommendation?)

## Recommendations

1. What recommendations or suggestions do you have for policy changes that could decrease the number of Cal-Learn teens who do not graduate from high school or an equivalent? (If not mentioned in their answers, probe: For example, educating participants in orientation, conducting outreach efforts geared towards at-risk teens, providing child care for in-home study, working more closely with the Cal-Learn case managers, more timely notification of noncompliance, expanding the reasons for good cause determination, etc.).
  - (a) Do you have any suggestions that would improve the work flow or that would reduce the effort necessary to complete your job duties?
  - (b) Do you have specific training needs connected to any changes in program rules and regulations? (Probe: GEARS or LEADER screens, eligibility criteria, deferrals and exemptions).
  - (c) How might the provision of specialized and non-specialized supportive services improve? (i.e. easier referral process, further automation, increased availability of service providers, etc...)

## **Survey Methodology**

## Survey Methodology

RES conducted the case manager survey for this report in an effort to follow up on issues addressed in focus group interviews. Focus group sessions are often characterized by unpredictable conversational dynamics, and facilitators sometimes have difficulty obtaining necessary elaboration on, or confirmation of, key points emerging out of the larger discussion. RES revised an initial version of the case manager survey instrument after conducting five separate focus group sessions with Cal-Learn case managers at AFLP offices in Hollywood, Carson, Pacoima, East Los Angeles and Pasadena. This enabled RES to construct a survey that rounds out and complements key observations made in the focus group interviews.

After producing the case manager survey instrument, RES obtained the number of Cal-Learn case managers working at all of the offices for each of the four AFLP agencies – Project Nateen, El Nido Family Centers, AltaMed Health Youth Services, and Foothill Family Service. With the assistance of supervisory personnel at each AFLP agency, RES distributed the appropriate number of surveys at all the AFLP offices where Cal-Learn case managers work. Table C2 shows the number of case managers responding to the survey at each AFLP office:

**Table C2. Survey Participation at each AFLP Office**

<b>AFLP Office</b>	<b>Number of Cal-Learn Case Managers Employed</b>	<b>Number of Cal-Learn Case Managers Responding to Survey</b>
<b>Project Nateen</b>		
Hollywood Office	6	5
<b>El Nido</b>		
Carson	8	7
Inglewood	3	3
Pacoima	6	6
Palmdale	4	4
South Los Angeles	8	7
<b>AltaMed</b>		
East Los Angeles	11	10
Lynwood	6	5
<b>Foothill</b>		
El Monte	7	7
Pasadena	4	4
West Covina	6	5
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>63</b>

Researchers in the social sciences typically view surveys as a means by which to obtain systematic information about a population of interest. The response rate for the Cal-Learn case manager survey was 91 percent – 63 of the 69 case managers employed at the AFLP agencies at the time this report was being prepared participated in the survey. The generalizations made on the basis of the survey data are therefore justified on the basis of the relatively high response rate.



## **Survey Instrument And Results**



# Cal-Learn Case Manager's Survey

N = 63

Thank you for taking time to complete this survey. Your experience and the opinions offered in this survey are very important because they will help improve the Cal-Learn program.

**Your responses will be kept strictly confidential and will remain anonymous.**

**Please darken the circles completely and write your answers clearly.**

**Please identify your agency:**

- 27 ☐ El Nido    15 ☐ AltaMed Health Services  
16 ☐ Foothill Family Center  
5 ☐ Project Nateen/Children's Hospital Los Angeles

**Please identify the zip code where your agency is located:**

**AND**

--	--	--	--	--

**1. How long have you worked as a Cal-Learn Case Manager?**

- 27.1 ☐ Less than 1 year    ☐ 3 - 4 years    18.6  
18.6 ☐ 1 - 2 years    ☐ More than 5 years    35.6

**2. Did you have prior experience working with troubled or at-risk teens?**

- 79.7 ☐ Yes    ☐ No    20.3

**2a. If "Yes", how long have you worked with at-risk teens?**

- 19.1 ☐ Less than 1 year    ☐ 3 - 4 years    27.7  
21.3 ☐ 1 - 2 years    ☐ More than 5 years    31.9

**3. What is your average monthly Cal-Learn caseload? .....**

3	6
---	---

**4. Do you feel your Cal-Learn caseload is too large to provide these teens with the intensive case management they need?**

- 76.3 ☐ Yes    ☐ No    23.7

**5. What languages do you speak when working with the teens in your Cal-Learn caseload? (Please choose all that apply)**

- 32.2 ☐ English    1.7 ☐ Russian    0 ☐ Chinese  
64.4 ☐ Spanish    0 ☐ Vietnamese    0 ☐ Tagalong  
1.7 ☐ Armenian    0 ☐ Cambodian    0 ☐ Other

**Please list any other languages:**

**6. What proportion of your Cal-Learn teen caseload has been sanctioned for not attending school because of delays in getting child care?**

- 14 ☐ None    ☐ 51% to 75%    14  
36.8 ☐ Less than 25%    ☐ 76% to 100%    0  
29.8 ☐ 25% to 50%    ☐ Don't know    5.3

**7. Do you ever encounter barriers in linking Cal-Learn teens with transportation and/or child care?**

- 20.3  
76.3 ☐ Yes    ☐ No    ☐ Not sure    3.4

**8. In your estimation, what proportion of your Cal-Learn teen caseload needs mental health (MH) services?**

- 8.5 ☐ None    ☐ 51% to 75%    15.3  
47.5 ☐ Less than 25%    ☐ 76% to 100%    5.1  
23.7 ☐ 25% to 50%    ☐ Don't know    0

**9. If you have had problems linking Cal-Learn teens with MH services, explain why:**

- 51.7 ☐ Teens don't want service  
6.9 ☐ The teen's family or spouse won't allow service  
13.8 ☐ Problems accessing services  
20.7 ☐ No problems  
6.9 ☐ Please list other reason(s):

**10. In your estimation, what proportion of your Cal-Learn teen caseload needs substance abuse (SA) services?**

- 16.9 ☐ None    ☐ 51% to 75%    1.7  
64.4 ☐ Less than 25%    ☐ 76% to 100%    0  
11.9 ☐ 25% to 50%    ☐ Don't know    5.1

**11. If you have had problems linking Cal-Learn teens with SA services, explain why:**

- 43.1 ☐ Teens don't want service  
1.7 ☐ The teen's family or spouse won't allow service  
5.2 ☐ Problems accessing services  
44.8 ☐ No problems  
5.2 ☐ Please list other reason(s):

**12. In your estimation, what proportion of your Cal-Learn teen caseload needs domestic violence (DV) services?**

- 25** ☐ None ☐ 51% to 75% **3.3**  
**46.7** ☐ Less than 25% ☐ 76% to 100% **0**  
**20** ☐ 25% to 50% ☐ Don't know **5**

**13. If you have had problems linking Cal-Learn teens with DV services, explain why:**

- 32.2** ☐ Teens don't want service  
**15.3** ☐ The teen's family or spouse won't allow service  
**10.2** ☐ Problems accessing services  
**35.6** ☐ No problems  
**6.8** ☐ Please list other reason(s):
- 

**14. In your opinion, what proportion of teens in your Cal-Learn caseload are not academically prepared for high school?**

- 3.3** ☐ None ☐ 51% to 75% **31.7**  
**8.3** ☐ Less than 25% ☐ 76% to 100% **8.3**  
**46.7** ☐ 25% to 50% ☐ Don't know **1.7**

**15. What proportion of teens in your Cal-Learn caseload have such limited English language proficiency it affects their ability to progress in school.**

- 23.7** ☐ None ☐ 51% to 75% **8.5**  
**45.8** ☐ Less than 25% ☐ 76% to 100% **0**  
**22.2** ☐ 25% to 50% ☐ Don't know **0**

**16. What proportion of your Cal-Learn teen caseload is homeless?**

- 22.2** ☐ None ☐ 51% to 75% **1.7**  
**67.8** ☐ Less than 25% ☐ 76% to 100% **0**  
**6.8** ☐ 25% to 50% ☐ Don't know **1.7**

**17. In your estimation, what proportion of your Cal-Learn teen caseload consists of teens living in families not supportive of the program's goals regarding family planning?**

- 12.1** ☐ None ☐ 51% to 75% **3.4**  
**41.4** ☐ Less than 25% ☐ 76% to 100% **3.4**  
**36.2** ☐ 25% to 50% ☐ Don't know **3.4**

**For the following questions, please indicate how much you agree or disagree with the statements.**

	Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	No opinion	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
<b>18.</b> School districts need to become more familiar with the Cal-Learn program and its requirements.	<input type="radio"/> <b>1.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>0</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>1.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>5.1</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>91.5</b>
<b>19.</b> Cal-Learn teens often have trouble attending school because their child care needs are not met.	<input type="radio"/> <b>3.3</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>1.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>10</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>43.3</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>41.7</b>
<b>20.</b> If the bonuses were paid directly to the teens in the Cal-Learn program, they would be more motivated to get good grades and complete high school.	<input type="radio"/> <b>3.3</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>1.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>0</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>26.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>68.3</b>
<b>21.</b> Cal-Learn teens in my caseload sometimes have trouble enrolling in school because they aren't eligible for child care and transportation assistance until after they are enrolled	<input type="radio"/> <b>5</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>1.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>6.7</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>25</b>	<input type="radio"/> <b>61.7</b>

	Strongly disagree	Disagree somewhat	No opinion	Agree somewhat	Strongly agree
22. Cal-Learn teens sometimes have trouble arranging for child care with the R&R agencies.	○ 3.3	○ 5	○ 21.7	○ 33.3	○ 36.7
23. Cal-Learn paperwork takes too much time, is needlessly repetitive and does not allow me enough time to provide proper case management to the Cal-Learn teens in my caseload.	○ 1.7	○ 1.7	○ 1.7	○ 38.3	○ 56.7
24. I sometimes have trouble contacting the GSWs.	○ 10	○ 20	○ 6.7	○ 50	○ 13.3
25. The Cal-Learn case managers should be allowed to contact the GSWs by email	○ 8.3	○ 5	○ 25	○ 20	○ 41.7
26. Some Cal-Learn teens in my caseload have problems going to school because transportation is not available in their area.	○ 15	○ 38.3	○ 26.7	○ 16.7	○ 3.3
27. I sometimes have difficulties in getting the school district(s) to release the report cards of Cal-Learn teens in my caseload.	○ 3.3	○ 6.7	○ 11.7	○ 38.3	○ 40
28. I am frequently worried about my safety when I make home visits to the teens in my caseload.	○ 5	○ 13.3	○ 1.7	○ 65	○ 15
29. Changes in Cal-Learn policy or program rules and requirements are sometimes not communicated in a timely manner.	○ 1.7	○ 6.8	○ 10.2	○ 45.8	○ 35.6
30. Cal-Learn teens are sometimes sanctioned for not attending school because of delays in getting transportation	○ 10	○ 16.7	○ 16.7	○ 43.3	○ 13.3
31. The approval time for supportive services should be streamlined to eliminate long delays	○ 3.3	○ 0	○ 5	○ 21.7	○ 70
32. Some of the Cal-Learn teens in my caseload have undiagnosed or untreated learning disabilities that contribute to their lack of school success.	○ 1.7	○ 8.3	○ 15	○ 41.7	○ 33.3
33. Cal-Learn teens often do not understand the notices DPSS sends them.	○ 3.3	○ 1.7	○ 3.3	○ 35	○ 56.7
34. The supervisors of the GSWs and the Cal-Learn case managers should attend similar trainings.	○ 1.7	○ 5	○ 1.7	○ 28.3	○ 63.3



64977

**If you have any comments or suggestions, please share them with us here.**

**(Please write legibly!)**

**THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN THIS SURVEY WE  
APPRECIATE YOUR COMMENTS AND SUGGESTIONS**

# **APPENDIX D**

## **Official Cal-Learn Forms**

## CAL-LEARN REGISTRATION/PROGRAM INFORMATION/ ORIENTATION APPOINTMENT NOTICE

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

CASE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

CASE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

PHONE NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

REGISTRANT'S NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

### EXPLANATION OF THE CAL-LEARN PROGRAM

The Cal-Learn Program is designed to encourage and assist teen parents to stay in or return to school.

#### REGISTRANT

You have been registered for the Cal-Learn program. You must participate in Cal-Learn unless you are exempt.

You must participate in the Cal-Learn program if you are pregnant or a custodial parent under the age of 19 and do not have a high school diploma or equivalent.

If you turn 19 while you are in the Cal-Learn program and have not graduated from high school or equivalent, you may be able to continue participating in the program until you turn 20 years old.

#### WHAT CAL-LEARN MEANS TO YOU

- The Cal-Learn Program encourages teenage CalWORKs recipients who are pregnant or already a parent to stay in or return to school. Participants may receive cash for meeting program requirements.
- Cal-Learn participants will receive case management services and assistance with child care and transportation costs.
- Your case manager will:
  - Help you with needed health care and services available in the community.
  - Tell you about the different kinds of child care and where to find child care.
  - Ensure that you understand Cal-Learn requirements and what will happen if you do not meet these requirements.
  - Help you to develop an educational plan.
  - Watch your progress and help you to make necessary changes to your school program.

The next step for you will be to attend a Cal-Learn orientation.

You have been scheduled to attend orientation on \_\_\_\_\_

at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock at \_\_\_\_\_

If you cannot keep this appointment, please call your Cal-Learn case manager: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_  
by \_\_\_\_\_ to schedule another appointment.

This notice is not notification of the program requirements. The Cal-Learn program requirements will be given to you during the orientation.

**YOU MUST GO TO ORIENTATION EVEN IF YOU BELIEVE YOU MAY BE EXEMPT OR DEFERRED.**

If you think this action is wrong you may ask for a hearing. The Cal-Learn hearing rights information on the back of this form tells you how. You can also call your Cal-Learn worker if you think this notice is wrong.

## CAL-LEARN PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

DATE:
CASE NAME:
REGISTRANT'S NAME:
CASE NUMBER:
CASE MANAGER NAME:
PHONE NUMBER:

### THIS NOTICE IS NOTIFICATION OF THE PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

#### WHAT CAL-LEARN MEANS TO YOU

Because you have been registered for the Cal-Learn program:

- You are required to go to school on a full-time basis to get a high school diploma or equivalent.
- You are required to participate until you reach age 19 unless you are exempt.
- If you turn 19 while you are in the Cal-Learn program and have not graduated from high school or equivalent, you may be eligible to continue participating in the program until you turn 20 years old.
- You will be given the opportunity to help in the development of your case plan including a report card submittal schedule.
- You are required to submit your report card or progress report to your case manager.
- You can get up to four \$100 bonuses a year for getting a report card with grades that average a C or better. You could get four \$100 sanctions a year for getting grades that average below a D.
- You can receive a \$500 bonus upon graduation.

The county will provide case management services to help you with:

- Developing a report card schedule.
- Developing an educational plan to assist you in graduating from high school or equivalent.
- Monitoring your progress and help you make necessary changes to your school program.
- Providing referrals to appropriate community services.
- Making sure that you understand Cal-Learn requirements and consequences of not meeting program requirements.

You can receive child care, transportation and educational related expenses if needed.

It is your responsibility to tell your case worker if you move, change child care or need other supportive services, or have problems in meeting the program requirements.

Before we lower your cash aid for not making satisfactory progress in school, you will be given a chance to say why you did not. If you have a good reason, your cash aid will not be lowered.

#### EXEMPTIONS

You have been registered for the Cal-Learn program. A teen parent may be exempt if he or she:

- Is ill, injured, or physically unable to go to school.
- Is expelled from school and enrollment in an alternative school cannot be arranged.
- Cannot get child care or transportation.
- \* A CalWORKs foster care payment is made on behalf of the teen.

#### DEFERRAL

A teen may be deferred if the teen parent:

- Needs supportive or case management services which are temporarily not available.
- Has a special need that stops the teen parent from meeting program requirements and the special need cannot be met.
- The doctor has given a period of time to recover after the birth of a child.

Individuals who are deferred are still mandatory participants in Cal-Learn.

If you meet any of the listed reasons for being exempt or deferred from Cal-Learn you are still required to go to school. The California Education Code Section 48200 requires that you attend school.

You have the right to ask to be excused from Cal-Learn, or ask for services like child care and transportation, or to ask for any other service provided by the Cal-Learn Program. You may ask your case manager by phone or in person, or you may ask in writing.



**CAL-LEARN NOTICE OF A  
PARTICIPATION PROBLEM**

**TO:** \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

ISSUE DATE: _____	
CASE NAME: _____	CASE NUMBER: _____
CASE MANAGER NAME: _____	PHONE NUMBER: _____

If you have any questions, please call your Cal-Learn manager

There is a problem with your participation in the Cal-Learn program. In order to discuss this problem, we have scheduled an interview with you on: \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock at \_\_\_\_\_.

**HERE'S THE PROBLEM:**

- ☐ You did not make adequate progress in school.
- ☐ You did not come to your Cal-Learn orientation.
- ☐ You did not turn in your report card or progress report.
- ☐ You did not go to school.
- ☐ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

If you cannot keep this interview, please call your Cal-Learn manager by \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ to schedule another interview.

Teen parents may receive a \$100 sanction for not submitting a required report card or for turning in a report card that shows less than adequate progress.

**CAL-LEARN CHILD CARE AND TRANSPORTATION ARE AVAILABLE IF YOU  
NEED THEM TO HELP YOU KEEP THIS INTERVIEW.**

**WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THIS INTERVIEW?**

The purpose of the interview is to find out if you had a good reason for not doing what Cal-Learn requires.  
You can get free help with this interview from:

Legal Aid  
Office

Welfare Rights  
Office

CCWRO

**CAL-LEARN INFORMING NOTICE  
TO PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN  
OF CAL-LEARN PARTICIPANT**

ISSUE DATE: _____	
CASE NAME: _____	CASE NUMBER: _____
CASE MANAGER NAME: _____	PHONE NUMBER: _____

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

This is to inform you that there is a problem with \_\_\_\_\_'s participation in the Cal-Learn program. The problem is that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.

In order to discuss this problem, \_\_\_\_\_ has an appointment on \_\_\_\_\_, at \_\_\_\_\_ o'clock at \_\_\_\_\_.

You can call \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_ if you have questions.

The purpose of this appointment is:

- ☐ To find out if there was a good reason for \_\_\_\_\_ not doing what Cal-Learn requires.
- ☐ To come to an agreement on a Cal-Learn participation plan.

If \_\_\_\_\_ does not have a good reason and does not agree to go to school or it's equivalent, your cash aid may be lowered.

As the parent or guardian of \_\_\_\_\_, you may also attend this meeting.

**CAL-LEARN NOTICE OF  
REPORT CARD SUBMITTAL SCHEDULE**

ISSUE DATE: _____	
CASE NAME: _____	CASE NUMBER: _____
CASE MANAGER NAME: _____	TELEPHONE NO. _____

If you have any questions, please call your Cal-Learn case manager.

TO: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

On \_\_\_\_\_, ☐ we ☐ case manager decided the dates your report cards or progress reports are due.

The dates your report cards or progress reports must be given to your Cal-Learn Case Manager are as follows:

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_

[Your supportive services needs will be addressed in another notice.]

You must have completed 90 full days in the Cal-Learn program before you can get a bonus or sanction. You can call your case manager to find out when your 90 days begins.

If you do not receive a report card or progress report call your Cal-Learn case manager.

If you do not give your report card or progress report to your Cal-Learn case manager your aid may be lowered.

If you have good reason for not turning in your report card or progress report your aid will not be lowered but you must notify your case manager immediately of your reason.

If you think this action is wrong, you may ask for a hearing. The Cal-Learn hearing rights information on the back of this form tells you how. You can also call your Cal-Learn case manager if you think this action is wrong.

Case manager name: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone number: \_\_\_\_\_

**RULES:** These rules apply: MPP 42-766.33, 42-766.6. You may review them at your welfare office.

# **APPENDIX E**

## **Glossary**

## GLOSSARY

Term	Actual Title	Definitions
AFLP	Adolescent Family Life Program	The Maternal and Child Health Branch of the California Department of Health Services established a pilot demonstration project known as the Adolescent Family Life Program (AFLP). Today the acronym is used to indicate the four non-profit agencies which have contracts with DPSS to provide Cal-Learn services.
Ancillary Expenses		Expenses for school supplies, etc... in order to attend and graduate from high school.
AU	Assistance Unit	The assistance unit is the family or household of the Cal-Learn teen.
Bonus		Cal-Learn teens are eligible for up to \$100 bonus (additional cash) if they turn in their report card on time with a grade point average of 2.0. They are also eligible for a \$500 graduation bonus.
CalWORKs	California Work Opportunity and Responsibility to Kids program	California's implementation of TANF cash assistance. Features work requirements, time limits, etc.
CAO	Chief Administrative Office	The CAO develops recommendations on fiscal and policy matters for the Board of Supervisors, provides effective leadership of the County organization in carrying out the Board's policy decisions, and ensures financial stability.
Case	Cal-Learn case	The Cal-Learn case is the pregnant or parent teen. The participant may have their own case (i.e. they are over 18 years, and they have their own Assistance Unit) or they may be nested within their parent or legal guardian's case/assistance unit.
Caseload		The number of cases.
CDSS	California State Department of Social Services	The State agency that oversees Social Services.
CL	Cal-Learn	The California program for providing social services to pregnant and parent teens.
CL1	Cal-Learn Registration/Program Information/Orientation Appointment Notice	Orientation notice form sent by DPSS to eligible participants to notify them of the mandatory program enrollment.
CL2	Cal-Learn Program Requirements	Notice to participants about the program requirements, exemptions, deferrals, bonuses, and sanctions.
CL3	Cal-Learn Notice of a Participation Problem	The form contains a list of participation problems, to be checked by the case manager, including failure to show for Orientation.
CL4	Cal-Learn Information Notice To Parent/Legal Guardian of Cal-Learn Participant	This form informs the participant of an appointment with their case manager to discuss good cause.
CL8	Cal-Learn Notice Of Report Card Submittal Schedule	Informs the participant of the dates when the report cards are due to the case manager

Term	Actual Title	Definitions
Client	Cal-Learn participant	Cal-Learn program participant.
CM	Case Manager	Case managers who provide intensive case management to Cal-Learn teens.
DCFS	Department of Children and Family Services	Los Angeles County agency in charge of the safety of children, including placing children in foster care.
DPSS	Department of Public Social Services	Los Angeles County agency delivering and administering social services, including CalWORKs, Food Stamps, and Medi-Cal.
DV	Domestic Violence	
EW	Eligibility Worker	An Eligibility Worker can be either a CalWORKs EW, or a minor EW or the Eligibility Worker for the Cal-Learn program.
GPA	Grade Point Average	Grade points per unit are assigned as follows: A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, and F=none. The grade point average (GPA) is calculated by dividing the total amount of grade points earned by the total amount of credit units.
GEARS	GAIN Employment and Activity Reporting System	Computer system used for tracking GAIN participants.
GED	General Educational Development	High School equivalency degree.
GSS	GAIN Service Supervisor	Supervises GAIN Service Workers
GSW	GAIN Service Worker	GAIN employee who conducts appraisal and assessment of potential GAIN participants.
HIPAA	Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act	Act of 1996 required the Department of Health and Human services to adopt confidentiality standards for electronic health care transactions.
ID	Identification Card	
Intake	Orientation	An Orientation session is usually referred to as intake, as it is an intake of information about the participant/client.
LEADER	Los Angeles Eligibility, Automated Determination, Evaluation and Reporting	New system replacing CDMS, IBPS, and WCMIS; began operational testing on May 3, 1999, in one office.
Lodestar		The AFLP's management information system since 1988.
N	Number of observations	Number of GAIN participants, in most cases.
Nested	Nested case	When a pregnant or parent teen is on their parent or legal guardian's CalWORKs case.
Medi-Cal	Medical aid, also termed Medicaid in other states.	California's Federally-funded Medicaid program. Provides health insurance to poor families and individuals. All CalWORKs families are eligible for Medi-Cal assistance.
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding	DPSS and the AFLPs have an MOU.
PT	Participant	In this study, refers to either a Cal-Learn or a CalWORKs participant.

<b>Term</b>	<b>Actual Title</b>	<b>Definitions</b>
RES	Research and Evaluation Services	RES is a unit within the CAO Service Integration Branch. RES is responsible for the evaluation of CalWORKs in Los Angeles County of which this report is a part.
R & R	Resource and Referral Agency	The child care agencies that provide services within geographic regions, called R&R regions.
Sanction		When a participant does not comply with the GAIN program requirements, their cash aid may be reduced or stopped, until they provide a good reason for their non-compliance or start complying with the GAIN requirement which they failed to meet.
SP	Senior Parent	The senior parent is the adult CalWORKs participant, who is the head of the aided unit.
SIB	Service Integration Branch	Branch of the Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Office created in 2000 to support and coordinate collaborative policy development initiatives; assist County departments integrate service delivery systems; and help provide children and families with needed information.
TANF	Temporary Aid to Needy Families	Federal cash aid program with time limits and work requirements. It replaced AFDC in 1996.
TranStar	Automated Transit Trip Planning System	Trip planner utilized by GSWs to verify transportation eligibility for teens.
Trimester	Three months.	Pregnancies last for nine months or three trimesters.
WIC	Women Infants and Children	A nutrition program for pregnant and parent women and their children.

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